

Ryazanov was fired from his job and expelled from the party for "having helped Menshevik traitors²⁹". During a face-to-face meeting with him, Roubin, consumed with shame, declared to him: David Borisovitch, do you remember that I gave you a file...? When they brought him back to his cell, he tried to kill himself by banging his head against the door. On March 1, 1931, the trial began. Roubine carried in the pocket of his overcoat his "confession", corrected in red pencil by Gay; he redid his deposition. "Didn't you act on behalf of a **[Menshevik] organization?**", asked prosecutor Krylenko. "No, there was no organization, there was only the great confidence he had in me," replied Rubin. Krylenko adjourned the hearing and went to scold Roubin in an adjacent room: "You did not say what you had to say. After the adjournment, I will call you back to the stand and you will correct your statement." Roubin refused. , Krylenko reserved a slew of insults for him. His sentence was increased to five years in prison, instead of the agreed three. Released in 1935, he dared not return to Moscow, out of shame. At the end of 1937, he was again arrested and died in prison. Ryazanov was arrested after the Union Bureau trial and shot a few years later.

Shortly after this show trial, Stalin wrote and published a book, **Provokator Anna Serebriakova**, under the pseudonym of IV Alexeev, whose first two initials are eloquent. It is the fascinating product of a brain that observes itself while pretending to observe another; the true identity of the author was never revealed, but a body of evidence suffices. The book consists mainly of reports, circulars, receipts and other documents from the real file of Anna Serebriakova, an Okhrana agent arrested in 1925 and died in prison. The last chapter offers a gripping image of the mind of an Okhrana agent, in fact a psychological self-portrait of the author. In the preface, Stalin states that the defendants in the trial illustrated their parentage with "their ancestral father... the provocateur of the Tsarist Okhrana":

"The village kulak who uses a stick and a sawed-off gun, Professor Ramzin and the writer Sukhanov belong to the same species [...] The same class ties which unite kulaks, teachers and literate people have their roots deep in history,

uniting past and present. Today in history we find the ancestral father of the current saboteur, the provocateur of the Tsarist Okhrana. »

He went on, in his characteristic repetitive style: [...] do we need to write about provocateurs and spies?

After all, this page has been turned forever and history does not retrace its steps. Do we need to tire our archivist fiber, do we need to plunge the contemporary reader back into the sinister and base actions of tsarism? »

And he

answered: "It seems to me that we should, indeed, tire our fiber of archivist. The provocateur is a close relative of the kulak and the saboteur. Ramzin robbed the confidence of the proletariat just as Azef robbed that of the party. Azef served the Okhrana and Razin, the international bourgeoisie. »

Stalin, however, did not need to tire his "archivist fiber": Anna Serebriakova had not been charged with murder or armed robbery; those crimes had been committed by Azef and Stalin.

The interest of this passage is that Stalin describes himself in it. The preface concluded with a "stern warning to all who, through cowardice, rapacity, or vocation, trade in human beings as if they were a commodity." That is to say, to anyone who digs into his archives. The warning strongly evokes an article written in 1927 by V.

Maksakov, Stalin's personal "expert" on the Okhrana, revealing that after the February Revolution, archivists sold lists of unmasked Okhrana agents to newspapers for a fee; it did not benefit them,³⁵ as Maksakov euphemistically reminded us.

"The biography of the agent provocateur Serebriakova is certainly instructive," Stalin wrote. It constitutes the reflection of the history of the revolutionary movement in the life of an extraordinary person. »

Who else but Stalin could write that an Okhrana agent was "an extraordinary person" whose life reflected the history of the revolutionary movement?

Better: the book offered the psychological profile of an Okhrana agent, "difficult to define, imagine and describe"; nevertheless he cited a **psychologicheskoyou razdvoennost**, that is to say a psychological duality, a "double personality" and an aptitude to "separate one's thoughts from one's

words", which required "a gigantic power of will" and a "stainless steel control of his words". Stalin added, admiringly:

"The split personality did not overwhelm Serebriakova. On the contrary, it became the foundation of her character and the pivot of her whole life. [...] Duality had ceased to be a torture imposed on her from outside and of which she had to constantly become aware in order to control it; this very duality had become his way of life and the meaning of his own existence. »

The "gigantic will power" of such an agent and the "stainless steel control of his words" gave him the pride "of being unique" and the conviction of his "importance" as the "keeper of a secret", raising it above the common. Such an agent possessed "a sense of superiority" over his Okhrana contact; he could say to himself: "On me and people like me lies the security of the regime that you are called upon to defend." "Quite appropriately, Stalin evoked in his book the habit of accusing others of what he himself was guilty of, a habit which he happily defined as the "false target" method.

How lucid was Stalin? On the one hand, the mechanism of unloading his faults on others would have been ineffective if he had been aware of his projections. On the other hand, the admiring portrait he draws of the Okhrana agent indicates that he was aware of his dual personality. He masterfully describes the character of the agent provocateur:

"We will not assume the task of revealing the mystery of this person. If it is true that 'the human soul is darkness', then the 'soul' of any provocateur is indeed very dark, and that of Serebriakova is three times as obscure.

Stalin's anxiety over his Okhrana file caused him to systematically destroy and falsify archival documents to "prove" that the file never existed. Thus, between 1924 and 1927, the rewritten and abridged version of the report of the Muraviev commission was published under the direction of PE Shchegolev⁴¹. All references to the rivalry between Stalin and Malinovsky and the Rozmirovich affair were

deleted, as well as the depositions of Lenin and Zinoviev on Malinovsky, before this same commission, in May 1917. Missing

also Vasiliev's May 21 deposition, in which he describes the Malinovsky affair as the Okhrana's most outrageous provocation.

Alas, this last testimony suddenly resurfaced in 1930, at least partially, in the book **Okhraniki i avantouristy** ("Officers of the Okhrana and adventurers"), by Shchegolev himself; the author reports that Vasiliev "presented himself as the whistleblower of the provocations of his colleagues in the secret services and that one could not deny him the title of the best informed man" on the question. These praises do not prevent Shchegolev from omitting the Malinovsky affair, which was nevertheless Vasiliev's trump card.

Despite his solemn claim: "I quoted the Vasiliev report in its entirety", he knowingly redacted it and also omitted any mention of the Okhrana agent "Vassili42"...

NOTES

1. Trotsky, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 222.

2. **Ibid.**, p. 210.

3. Maksakov, **op. cit.**, p. 27-31.

4. B. Prianishnikov, "Pokhishchenie generala Koutepova", **Novoe roussoye slovo**, p. 27-31.

5. Stephen Schwartz, "Intellectuals and Assassins: Annals of Stalin's Killerati", **The New York Times Book Review**, January 24, 1988, p. 3 and 31. See also John J. Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 100-102.

6. Felix Svetlov, interview in New York, 1990. See also Vitaly Rapoport and Youry Alexeev, **Izmena rodine**, London, 1988, p. 502 **sq.** And Schwartz, **op. cit.**, p. 3 and 31 and Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 100-102.

7. Svetlov, interview, **cf.** footnote 6.

8. Prianishnikov, **op. cit.**

9. The author served his prison term in the Norilsk prison camp together with Lev Rudminsky. A native of Theodisia, in the Crimea, Roudminski had known the author's parents in his childhood. Arrested in 1937, Rudminsky was a foreman of house construction in Norilsk. The camp medical staff supplied him with opium and it was under the influence of this drug that he sometimes boasted of his heroic exploits and, in particular, of the kidnapping of General Kutieпов. However, he never mentioned Blumkine, nor Stalin's file at the Okhrana, and he

was apparently unaware of the connection of Kutieпов's abduction with this dossier.

10. One of them was Lev Gelfand, who fled to the West and lived to old age under the pseudonym "Mr. Moore, American Businessman". **see** Prianishnikov, **op. cit.**

11. IP Istkov was detained in prison together with Kutyepov's son at the Vladimir Central prison and thus made his acquaintance.

12. Letter from Rafael Bagratouni to ID Levine, May 8, 1967, in the Levine's archives (copy in author's archives).

13. **Biouleteen oppozitsii**, no. 19, April 1930, p. 18.

14. **Ibid.**, p. 8.

15. **Ibid.**, p. 1.

16. Walter G. Krivitski, **In Stalin's Secret Service**, New York, 1939, p. 133.

17. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 114.

18. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 282.

19. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 137.

20. **Ibid.**, p. 114.

21. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 281-283.

22. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, citing **Proletarski prigovor nad vretiliami interventami** (transcript of legal proceedings), Moscow, 1930, p. 32.

23. Lyons, **op. cit.**, p. 170, quoted by Hyde, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 280.

24. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 283.

25. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 132-137.

26. **Ibid.**, p. 34.

27. **Ibid.**, p. 132 **sq.**

28. **Ibid.**, p. 132-134.

28. **Ibid.**, p. 134-136.

29. **Ibid.**, p. 132.

30. **Ibid.**, p. 134-136.

31. **Ibid.**, p. 132.

32. Even the grammar demonstrates Stalin's paternity; indeed, the book contains errors of the same type as in Stalin's other writings,

common among people who are not familiar with the language of the country. There are inappropriatenesses, such as "**starchestvo**" instead of "**starost** ", to define Serebriakova's advanced age, as well as non-Russian expressions, such as "**proshedshee s nashtoshchim**" instead of "**proshloe s nashtoshchim** ", "**liudi odnogo poriadka**" instead of "**liudi odnogo poshiba** ", or even "**krepie sviazi**" instead of "**protchnye sviazi** ".

[33.](#) Alexeev, **Provokator Anna Serebriakova**, Moscow, 1932, p. 3 sq.

[34.](#) **Ibid.**

[35.](#) Maksakov, **Arkhiv revoliutsii**, **op. cit.**, p. thirty.

[36.](#) Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 4.

[37.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 160-180.

[38.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 175 sq.

[39.](#) See Freud, **Psychoanalytic notes**, **op. cit.**, vol. I, c. 3 See also Langer, **op. cit.**, p. 183-185.

[40.](#) Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 180.

[41.](#) **Fallenie tsarkogo rejima**, **op. cit.**

[42.](#) Shchegolev, **op. cit.**, p. 138-149.

21 I know what kind of revolutionary you are! »

In 1930, Nadezhda Alliloueva, Stalin's wife, enrolled at the Industrial Academy to learn textile techniques. The director was the only one who knew his identity. The GPU posted two agents in Nadejda's class; still others drove her to the Academy and dropped her off a block away. Stalin, at the same time, gave the order for a forced collectivization of the peasantry.

Nadezhda learned from the mouths of his fellow students the horrors of mass deportations and executions of peasants, the systematic extermination of the kulaks, the famine in Ukraine, in the North Caucasus and other regions of the country. He was told of those hordes of orphaned children who wandered about in search of shelter and food, those women who sold themselves for a few crumbs of food fallen from the table of the party bureaucrats. She reported to Stalin what she had heard, but he dismissed it as "Trotskyist rumors". When, on another occasion, she mentioned cases of cannibalism in Ukraine, he flew into a violent rage and accused her of "spreading anti-Soviet propaganda of the enemies of the people". He ordered Karl Pauker, the head of the GPU operations department, to arrest the students who had reported this information to him. He also forbade Nadezhda to attend his classes, but she took them anyway when Avel Enukidjé, a close friend and adviser to the family, intervened to change Stalin.

In May 1930, Stalin ordered that all institutions of higher learning be purged of members of the "right-wing" opposition, led by Bukharin, Rykov and Tomsy; this opposition had appeared at the XVth Party Congress in 1927, with the proclamation of the forced collectivization of the peasantry. Bukharin opined that Stalin had the tools to blackmail and control Kalinin and Voroshilov, two members of the Politburo. A free peasantry was then incompatible with Stalin's desire for absolute power. A peasant who could feed himself and his family without depending on the party apparatus represented in his eyes a class enemy. Gold

brought the peasants closer to the serfs of the Middle Ages than to the socialism envisaged by the leaders of the left opposition.

Stalin himself presided over the purge of opposition members within the Industrial Academy. On the evening of May 29, one of the students, Nikita Khrushchev, was called to the telephone in the dormitory. An unknown voice told him: "This is Mekhlis, the editor-in-chief of Pravda. Can you come to my office right away? I will send my car to pick you up. There is an urgent matter I would like to discuss with you."

"Lev Mekhlis, who was Stalin's assistant, read Khrushchev a letter about 'political machinations and illegal procedures that had taken place to choose a right-wing delegation' and told him that the letter came from the Academy." Do you agree with the content of this letter?", asked Mekhlis.

"Yes, entirely," Khrushchev replied. "Would you put your signature on it? Khrushchev, unaware that the letter had been written by Stalin, replied: "But I don't know the author."

Mekhlis said, "It doesn't matter, neither your name nor that of the author will appear in this case. I ask you to sign this because I trust you. So Khrushchev signed. This was the start of his career in the Kremlin⁴.

Several years later, Khrushchev recounted that this statement had the effect of a clap of thunder in a blue sky. The Academy went into turmoil. Classes were suspended and, reports Khrushchev, "I was appointed chairman of the conference **[in which the Academy was to participate]** and included among the delegates."

The whole country was undergoing such purges. Old Bolsheviks, who had been in the party even before the Revolution, found themselves pushed around by young guns of the Khrushchev type. The latter says that when he enrolled at the Academy, it was "swarming with right-wingers, who had taken control of the party cell." The chairman of this cell, Khakarev, had been a member of the party since 1906 and, according to Khrushchev, "he belonged to what we called the old guard [...] which was hostile to Stalin and the General Line of the party".

Stalin catered to the ambitions of newcomers to the party such as than Khrushchev. Born in 1894 in a village on the Russian-Ukrainian border, he left with his family for Youzovka, in Ukraine, where his father had found a job as a miner; During the First World War

world, he had himself worked in a mine as a riveter, thus avoiding conscription, since it was spared the miners. Drafted into the Red Army during the Civil War, he joined the Bolshevik Party. Returning to Yuzovka in 1922, he had learned that his wife had died of starvation the previous year. He remarried and worked in the mine as a party organizer; he also attended classes at the Rabfak, the Workers' School, which provided primary education. In 1925, he was a delegate to the IX Congress of the Ukrainian Party, chaired by a protege of Stalin, Lazar Kaganovitch. He moved Khrushchev up the ranks of the party bureaucracy.

In 1927, Khrushchev was this time delegated to Moscow, on the occasion of the XVth Congress. He saw Stalin for the first time, witnessed the defeat of the opposition and voted for the General Line, defended by Stalin. In 1929 he was sent to study metallurgy at the Moscow Industrial Academy; at first he was not admitted, not being considered sufficiently instructed; but under pressure from Kaganovitch, he was enrolled in the first year. In May 1930, Kaganovich told Stalin about his protege; that was how Stalin found the right student for his "fake" letter. Present as a "non-delegate" at the XVI Congress, he heard Stalin proclaim his "five-year plan in four years" [sic] and demand "the liquidation of the kulaks as a social class". After the Congress, Khrushchev was appointed party secretary at the Industrial Academy, and Stalin's speech to the graduates made a strong impression on him; in his memoirs, he recounts having said to himself: "Here is a man who knows how to direct our minds and our energies" Stalin also remembered that towards the

- primordial goals.

Khrushchev looked at him with adoring eyes. Many years later, others noted that he was "receptive" to strong personalities.

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In January 1931, AP Shirin, secretary of the party committee in Moscow for the Bauman district, was arrested and executed; Khrushchev succeeded him. Six months later, his counterpart in the Krasnaya Presnia, MN district Riutin, was also arrested; Stalin again appointed Khrushchev in his place. The fate of Ryutin, author of two anti-Stalinist pamphlets (known as the "Ryutin platform"), suggests that he was informed of Stalin's black file. Born in 1890 in the Siberian village of Verkhnee

Riutino, on the Angara River, Martimian Nikitich Riutin had been a commissar in a unit of the Red Army during the civil war. Party secretary in Irkutsk, before being transferred to Moscow in 1924, he had for six years supported Stalin in his conflict with the opposition and, at the XVI Party Conference, in April 1929, he had been elected candidate member of the Central Committee⁷. A year later, however, in June-July 1930, during the XVIth Congress, Riutin bitterly accused Stalin of being "a great agent provocateur" and "the gravedigger of the revolution⁸". Stalin asked the GPU to arrest Ryutin and have him executed, but Menzhinsky - who then had Stalin's file in his hands - referred it to the Central Control Commission and decided to expel Ryutin from the party, arrest him for "defamation of the leader of the party" and **dvurushnichestvo**, a term coined by Stalin for "duplicity", in reference to agents provocateurs. However, on January 17, the college of the GPU acquitted Riutin, deeming these accusations "unfounded". Ryutin returned to the party and to his position as secretary of the Krasnaya Presnya district. Six months later he was arrested again for writing two anti-Stalin pamphlets. One of them had about fifty typewritten pages and was entitled Stalin and the crisis of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the second, which had two hundred pages, Appeal to all party members.

Ryutin declared that Stalin was the evil genius of the Russian Revolution who, driven by his thirst for power and revenge, had brought it to the brink of ruin:

"Even the most brilliant and daring provocateur could not have invented anything better than what Stalin and his clique did to destroy the dictatorship of the proletariat. [...] We must end Stalin's rule as soon as possible.

— »

Ryutin and his friends had made copies of the pamphlets and distributed them to party members, attaching a note: "When you have read it, have it read. Multiply and distribute. On August 21, 1923, a small group met in the apartment of a junior Soviet official, Peter Silchenko, to discuss the "Ryutin platform."

Someone reported the discussion, not to the GPU, but to Stalin personally.

On September 20, a search of Silchenko's apartment took place. and, three days later, all the participants in this discussion were arrested. Among them was the son of Grigory Petrovski, a former Duma deputy. It was Peter Petrovski, whom Stalin often invited to his home and whom he kept "on a leash" thanks to Okhrana documents on his account. "We know everything about you," he told her. In 1905, you were partying with the chief of police in Pavlograd. This could get you in trouble! » Another time, Stalin waved his Okhrana dossier in his face, shouting: "People like you, we'll shoot them, but I'll have pity on you."

— Grigory Petrovski outlived Stalin, but his son Peter was accused of not reporting the "secret meeting of the plotters" to the authorities and he was sentenced to ten years in prison; at their end, in 1941, he was shot.

The violence of Stalin's rage against the "Ryutin platform" surprised several GPU officers. He demanded the immediate execution of Ryutin; this time, Menzhinsky referred it to Yan Routzutak, chairman of the Control Commission. It meets in extraordinary session at the beginning of

November 1932, to discuss the case of Ryutin and others. It was decided to exclude them from the party as "traitors" and "degenerates". Among the twenty defendants were Zinoviev and Kamenev, who were also accused of not having reported to the GPU what they knew of the "Ryutin platform". The GPU was ordered to indict them "in accordance with the full severity of revolutionary justice¹³". Stalin demanded the death penalty for all defendants, but Menzhinsky refused and referred it to the Politburo.

Stalin came up against unexpected resistance from Kirov, Kuibyshev and Ordzhonikidze. He had to accept simple prison sentences.

Ryutin was first sentenced to ten years, then his sentence was increased to fifteen.

— He was incarcerated in the atrocious "Susdal insulator". His wife and his two sons, Vissarion and Vassili, as well as his youngest, Lyouba, were driven from their homes. A few years later, they were all executed, with the exception of Liouba.

Stalin had good reason to suspect Ryutin of being informed of his file at the Okhrana: in 1930, the latter had abruptly passed from the role of an ardent partisan to that of an implacable enemy and had accused him of being "a great agent provocateur" and "a brilliant provocateur". But it was

the time when two crucial events had taken place: the discovery of the file in Dzerzhinsky's papers and Blumkin's attempt to smuggle it abroad.

Stalin insisted on having Riutin executed, which was unusual. Already, the execution of Blumkin, a party member, had to be carried out in secret by the GPU. Indeed, we had not yet got into the habit of executing party members.

At the time of Blumkin's liquidation and in the years that followed, rumors about the discovery of Stalin's file circulated in Moscow and came to the ears of press correspondents abroad.

In 1938, ID Levine, an American journalist and author of one of the first biographies of Stalin to appear in the West, wrote that he had "long been aware of information that certain Old Bolsheviks had a secret file from the archives of the Okhrana proving that Stalin had been a super-spy for the Tsar. of the existence of the black folder.

As far as Ryutin was concerned, Menzhinsky's refusal to execute him alarmed Stalin; he suspected the chief of the GPU of plotting against him. He first ordered the confiscation of all copies of the "Ryutin platform" and instructed the head of military counterintelligence, Yan Berzine, to search; it became a crime to possess a copy.

Stalin was not mistaken: Menzhinsky, in fact, was plotting against him; he was even considering deposing it. The latter therefore resisted not only the execution of Riutin, but also Stalin's maneuvers to transform the GPU into "an instrument of private power¹⁸". He probably intended to use the black folder. The project was unrealistic: Stalin was protected by a tribe of sycophants and an army of bodyguards. And Menzhinsky's state of health would deteriorate; he suffered from progressive **tabes dorsalis** , a syphilitic sequelae; his disability forced him to lie most of the time on a sofa in his office. The GPU was in fact in the hands of his assistant, Yagoda.

A report on Stalin's desk caught his attention: a young peasant, Pavlik Morozov, from the small village of Gerasimovka, in the Urals, had denounced his father Trofim, president of the village soviet, accusing him of hiding wheat and of resisting collectivization. pavlik testified against his father in court. The episode must have struck Stalin and reminded him of his own testimony, when he was ten years old, against his father Vissarion. His first reaction was disgust: "What a little pig!" Denouncing his own father But he pulled himself together and decided to glorify the boy and use him in his collectivization campaign.

The torments of the Morozov family began when the father, Trofim, had left his wife and four children to live with another woman in the same village. The mother had then pushed her eldest, Pavlik, to complain to the local GPU, hoping to scare the infidel and bring him back to the home. Disastrous calculation: the GPU dictated to Pavlik a "politically correct" testimony and Trofim was condemned to ten years of forced labor. Stalin intervened in the tribulations of the Morozovs.

Trofim died in a labor camp under obscure circumstances, and on September 6, 1932, a relative of the Morozovs, Ivan Potoupchik, an informer for his condition, led the peasants of Gerasimovka to the corpses of Pavlik and his younger brother Fedya, buried in the forest; he claimed that it was the kulaks who had killed them. In fact, it was the deputy head of the local GPU, Kartashev, who had given Potoupchik the order to kill the two boys and thus fabricate a "political murder"; Fedya had witnessed the murder of her brother and the assassin had had to silence him. Stalin

personally supervised the "investigation", through Poskrebyshv, head of his special secretariat, who transmitted his orders to Kartashev. A number of villagers and relatives of the missing father were arrested, accused of having killed the boys; they were executed immediately after the trial. Kartashev bragged:

"I counted thirty-seven people slaughtered by my works. I sent many others to a labor camp. I can kill in such a way that the blow cannot be heard. open my mouth and shoot it. I'm covered in blood like cologne, but you can't hear the shot. I'm an expert killer."

The Soviet press claimed that there were many other boys who would send their father to the dock. Throughout the next half-century, there were countless streets, squares, pioneer camps (Soviet scouts), factories named after Pavlik Morozov.

Stalin ordered that a statue of the unfortunate be erected at the entrance to Red Square and poems, songs, even a cantata for choir and orchestra based on the poem "Pavlik Morozov" were subsidized; there was even a **Pavlik Morozov opera**, where the father sang: "Why did I let him join the Pioneers? ", while there was no Pioneer camp in Gerasimovka. Until 1982, a Soviet writer claimed that the story of Pavlik "is still waiting for its Shakespeare²⁰".

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Two months after the assassination of Pavlik Morozov and the arrest of the circle of Riutin, Nadezhda Alliloueva, Stalin's wife, committed suicide.

Their relationship had been steadily deteriorating for years and they quarreled for political as well as private reasons. You are a torturer, that's what you are! ", she threw at him during a household scene. "You are torturing your own son, you are torturing your wife, you are torturing all the Russian people!"²¹ As usual, Stalin replied with obscene vulgarities. Once, Nadezhda Alliloueva exclaimed: 'I know what kind of revolutionary you are!'"²² This was a thinly veiled allusion to the Okhrana file, of which she and her brother were aware²³.

Nadezhda had been tormented for years by the flagrant contradiction between the man deified by the Soviet press and the man she knew. In the fall of 1932, in the last photo taken of her, she looks like a shadow.

On November 7, the fifteenth anniversary of the October Revolution, a military parade and civil demonstrations marched through Red Square and past Lenin's Mausoleum, with Stalin and the Politburo standing atop it. That evening, Stalin and his wife went to dinner at Voroshilov's. As usual, the guests drank heavily and raised strong toasts to Stalin. Nadezhda did not drink, which irritated Stalin. "Hey, you, but drink!

, Stalin called from across the table. "Don't yell at me 'hey, You"! ", she shot back. They quarreled once more and she left the table. Molotov's wife, Polina Zhemtjushina, followed her for the

console; they walked for a while in the Kremlin, then bade each other good night.

Back home, Nadezhda wrote a long letter to Stalin. Then she grabbed the small revolver her brother had given her and killed herself. Stalin came home early in the morning and, not knowing that his wife was dead, went to bed. In the morning, a maid found Nadezhda's body. One of the bodyguards later described the scene: "She was lying on the ground, in her black dress, her hair curly. The gun was near her²⁴ .

— Stalin was awake. Then Molotov, Enukidzé and other friends of the family came to console him; they found Nadejda's letter and gave it to him; he read it in silence and re-read it several times. Several years later, his daughter Svetlana wrote:

It was a terrible letter, full of reproaches and accusations, not only private, but partly political. At times Stalin was seized with anger and rage. It was because of the letter my mother had left for him.
» —

It was through an obituary notice that the people learned of the existence of a wife of Stalin: "The party member and comrade of Stalin's comrade 'The suddenly and prematurely.' — remains of died Nadezhda were placed in the Hall of Columns. Svetlana, then six years old, was led to the coffin. Frightened, she recoiled and began to cry; Enukidze took her aside to calm her down. Stalin also approached the coffin. Suddenly he pushed him away and turned on his heels. — He did not follow the funeral procession to the convent of Novodevichy²⁹.

NOTES

1. Orlov, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, op. cit., p. 301 sq.

2. Ibid.

3. Treadgold, **Twentieth Century Russia**, op. cit., p. 226.

4. NS Khrushchev, **Khrushchev remembers**, Boston-Toronto, p. 40 sq.

Khrushchev does not say whether he realized later that the letter had been written by Stalin.

5. Ibid., p. 42.

6. Film director Efim Sevela told me during an interview in Chappaqua, NY, in 1971, that the famous director of

cinema Georgy Choukraï had described Khrouchtchev like a "receptacle" of psychological influences.

7. Arkady Vaksberg, "Kak živoï c jivymi", **Literatournaïa gazeta**, June 29, 1988. See also Lev Razgon, "Nakonets", **Moskovskoye novosti**, n° 26, June 26, 1988.

8. Walter G. Krevitski, **I Was Stalin's Agent**, London, 1932, p. 132.

9. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 52, citing Boris Nicolaevski, **Power and the Soviet Elite**, New York, 1965, p. 29 See also Razgon, **op. cit.**

10. Vaksberg, "Kak živoï c jivymi", **op. cit.**

11. Levine, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 337. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 295; Medvedev cites documents from the Petrovski family archives.

12. Medvedev, **Let History Judge**, **op. cit.**, cf. previous note.

13. Vaksberg, "Kak živoï c jivymi", **op. cit.**

14. Razgon, **op. cit.**

15. ID Levine, Stalin Suspected of Forcing Trials to Cover His Past", **Journal American**, March 3, 1938.

16. Krevitsky, **I Was Stalin's Agent**, p. 182.

17. **Komsomolskaya pravda**, November 13, 1964.

18. **Izvestia**, August 31, 1964.

19. Robert Conquest, **Stalin, Breaker of Nations**, New York, 1991, p. eleven.

20. Youry Druzhnikov, "Saga o Pavlike Morozov", **Strana i mir**, No. 2 (44), March-April 1988, p. 114-117.

21. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 303.

22. Elizabeth Lermolo, **op. cit.**, p. 167.

23. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 309-311.

24. **Ibid.**, p. 300 sq.

25. **Postnie news**, Paris, August 8, 1934.

26. Svetlana Alliloueva, **Dvadsat pisem k drougou**, New York, 1967, p. 107 sq.

27. **Izvestia**, November 12, 1932.

28. Alliloueva, **Twenty Letters to a Friend**, **op. cit.**, p. 108.

29. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 306 sq.

22 Why Did You Kill Such A Lovely Man? »

At the XVII Party Congress in January 1934, Stalin proclaimed that the Soviet Union was free from obscurantism and "medievalism". The press reported that his speech was greeted with "thunderous and endless applause". In his address to Congress, Khrushchev proclaimed that Stalin was "the greatest leader of all times and of all peoples" and a "genius leader". Kirov's speech earned him a standing ovation and cheers: "Long live our Myronich! – that was his surname. After the secret ballot, the president of the electoral commission, VP Zatonski, discovered with astonishment that out of 1966 ballots collected, Stalin's name had been crossed out 1088 times, while that of Kirov had been crossed out only three times; he reported the results to Kaganovich and Stalin; they decided together to make up the results and claimed that Stalin's name had only been crossed out three times, like Kirov's. At a Politburo meeting, Stalin offered to resign; unsurprisingly, the other members renewed their confidence in him and Molotov told him: "No one can replace you. »

Stalin agreed: "Only our enemies assure that nothing will happen if Stalin is eliminated." Kirov also urged him to stay in his post, but advised him to be careful how he treated people. "When I left his office," he later told his friend Shudov, "I had the impression that my head was on the block. From the look Stalin gave me, I realized that I had initialed my death sentence. — »

Kirov had actually signed it a year earlier, when he opposed the execution of Ryutin. And he was not the only one: Ordzhonikidzé, Kuibyshev and Menzhinsky had done the same and therefore figured for Stalin on the list of men to be killed. Stalin retaliated by manipulating the Seventeenth Congress to eliminate Menzhinsky from the Central Committee. He also had some assassination plans. He chooses poison for Menzhinsky, the first on his list. His assistant, Genrikh Yagoda, a former pharmacist, had a

laboratory at the GPU and Stalin, files from Yagoda at the Okhrana; they had been given to him by Meir Trilisser, head of the foreign department of the GPU, who hoped to replace Yagoda. Miscalculation: Yagoda was promoted and Trilisser sent to the Comintern before being arrested and executed³. Stalin then charged Yagoda with major murders; the latter's assistants, Bulanov and Savolainen, for weeks spread a mixture of mercury and a special poison on the hangings of Menzhinsky's office. On May 10, 1934, the head of the GPU succumbed to it. His office was condemned for two years; Only then would Stalin's black file be found there. Menzhinsky's body was cremated and the urn placed in the last cell on the right of the passage between the low wall and Lenin's mausoleum. Another cell, on the left of the passage, would receive the urn of Ordjonikidzé three years later. To the left of this, Stalin reserved another for Kirov, after his assassination.

Stalin's intention was to lay the blame for Kirov's murder on the opposition. His agents approached two common criminals, the Vassiliev brothers, and offered them freedom from the murder. They accepted, got out of prison and tried to break into Kirov's house; but they heard several voices of men inside and they fled. Stalin, learning of this, immediately ordered their execution.

then came up another plan. He had received a letter from a certain Leonid Nikolayev, a minor official who complained about the persecution of Kirov and the party apparatus in Leningrad: Dear Iosif Vissarionovitch, I am driven to despair by undeserved persecution. Today, I feel capable of doing anything. The last words caught Stalin's attention; an investigation revealed that Nikolayev was a thirty-year-old invalid, unable to walk until the age of fourteen, who had joined the Bolsheviks during the Civil War, engaged in requisitioning bread from the peasants. After his refusal to leave Leningrad to participate in collectivization, he was expelled from the party, and it was then that he wrote to Stal On July 19, 1934 Stalin, who had just reorganized State Security, had incorporated the GPU into the NKVD (or "People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs", ie the secret police); Yagoda had become its chief. Stalin had wanted to have Efim Yevdokimov, a common criminal who had

led the "investigation" into the Shakty affair in 1928. But the local NKVD chief, Filip Medved, had strongly opposed it. Stalin then appointed another of his creatures, Ivan Zaporozhets, whose rise in the security apparatus he had ensured. During the civil war, Zaporozhets had been one of the leaders of the anarchist peasant army of Nester Makhno in the Ukraine, which gave Stalin a hold over him.

Zaporozhets introduced one of his agents among Nikolayev's friends. The man gave Nikolayev a revolver, took him to practice shooting, and provided him with a pass to the Smolny Palace, where Kirov had his office. Finding his behavior suspicious, Kirov's bodyguards twice arrested Nikolayev in the street, but both times Zaporozhets released him and returned his gun and the diary in which he had recorded his intention to kill. Kirov. On December 1, 1934, Nikolayev showed up at the Kirov Palace; given his past, the guards let him in without checking the contents of his briefcase. Hidden behind the half-open bathroom door on the third floor, Nikolayev waited for his victim; Kirov appeared, without his bodyguard Borisov, purposely restrained by NKVD agents, and Nikolayev killed him instantly with a bullet to the head. He then turned the gun on himself, but only managed to injure himself and fell lifeless on Kirov's body.

Stalin had already prepared for the news: he had drawn up a special decree, ordering a rapid investigation, excluding any pardon and deciding the immediate execution of death sentences. He summoned his old friend Avel Enukidzé, chairman of the Central Executive Committee, and had him sign and date it on the very day of Kirov's assassination, December 1, 1934¹⁰. The next day, Stalin's train, accompanied by brigades of the NKVD, arrived in Leningrad. Nikolayev was brought with his head bandaged into Stalin's office, "Why did you kill such a charming man?" ", asked Stalin, in an emotional voice. Nikolaiev replied that he had "shot the party". "And how did you get this revolver?" Nikolaiev then recognized Ivan Zaporozhets near Stalin; the man who had provided him the weapon had presented it to him; he understood that he had been duped by an agent provocateur. "Ask him," he replied, pointing to Zaporozhets. He trained me for four months, saying that the party needed it." Stalin then flew into a rage, as Nikolayev could denounce the murder as a provocation of the NKVD.

Take it! ", he shouted. And he threw Nikolayev's dossier in Yagoda's face, throwing at him: Clumsy! " Zaporozhets left the office with his head bowed¹¹ .

The make-up started immediately. Kirov's bodyguard was killed with a blow from an iron bar as he was taken from prison to interrogation¹². Nikolayev's "friend", an NKVD agent, was swiftly liquidated¹³. But Stalin delayed executing Nikolayev himself, hoping he would compromise his opponents. However, as it would undoubtedly take some time to extract a false confession from Nikolayev, Stalin returned to Moscow, taking Kirov's body with him.

The open coffin was displayed in the Hall of Columns, where members of the Politburo took turns to watch over it. Stalin, apparently overcome with emotion, hugged the body and kissed its cheek, declaring: "Farewell, my dear friend. We will ~~avenge~~ you!"¹⁴

Once again, these marks of tenderness towards an enemy he had just killed could pass for Stalin as shameless hypocrisy. But for this murder as on other occasions, the truth was more complex. Stalin's ability to recreate reality according to his political and emotional needs no doubt meant that at that moment, for him, it was Kirov's political enemies, led by Trotsky, who had armed Nikolayev's arm. When he walked away from the corpses of his enemies, Stalin was moved by their death, as if he himself was beyond reproach.

Nevertheless, he invented a plan to involve the leaders of the opposition in the murder of Kirov. He divided a sheet of paper and wrote on one side "Center of Moscow", with the name of Kamenev, and on the other "Center of Leningrad", with those of Zinoviev and Nikolayev. Within days he added thirteen names to the list, which he occasionally ~~rotated~~. Then he had them arrested, on the charge of having planned his assassination, that of Molotov and that of Kaganovitch. The defendants denied. Nikolayev's diary did not contain a single opponent's name; Stalin had it declared to be a ~~for~~ forgery. Lacking confessions, he simply had Nikolayev and the thirteen others executed.

Both in the Soviet press and in popular meetings, appeals were made for "revenge" and "vigilance", waving the hazy threat "

enemies of the people" and "White Guards". Indeed, Stalin had blamed the assassination of Kirov on White Guards in cahoots with foreign power. But he did not give up indicting the opposition. In a secret letter to party bodies, entitled "Lessons from the infamous murder of comrade Kirov", he demanded the arrest and expulsion from the party of opposition members and immediately executed those of them who were already locked up. Mass arrests took place in Moscow and Leningrad. On December 16, 1934, Zinoviev and Kamenev were taken from the Lubyanka to places of detention where they would serve their sentences for not denouncing the "Ryutin platform". They were also accused of having fomented the assassination of Kirov; they protested vehemently that they had then been in prison for two years: Stalin transformed the charge into "moral and political support". On January 15, 1935, along with several other members of the opposition, they admitted their "errors". They were sentenced to various prison terms, ten years for Zinoviev, five for Kamenev¹⁸. Stalin was still not satisfied; he had Kamenev's sentence increased to ten years, for having attempted to poison him. According to the verdict, Kamenev's sister-in-law had, at his instigation, given Stalin poisonous drugs at the Kremlin hospital where she worked. Her own husband testified against her.

Thousands of people met an even more terrible fate: Stalin "avenges" the murder of Kirov by mass executions. In a country where people had become accustomed to queuing for everything, a new kind arose: prisoners from the Lubyanka, Butyrki, Lefortovo and other prisons lined up to be shot. "Don't push!" Wait your turn! ", shouted the guards in the din of the shots and the cries of the victims. At intervals, the line stopped advancing, the time that the executioners regained their strength at a buffet where they served food and vodka. victims were buried in secret mass graves²⁰.

Ivan Zaporozhets and Filip Deved were sentenced for "lack of vigilance" at three years in a **kontslager**, literally a "concentration camp".

comfortable neighborhoods. Their wives were allowed to visit them. Nevertheless, Zaporozhets found that Stalin had been too harsh. — Not knowing Stalin's true nature, he hoped to be released soon: he was executed a few years later. NKVD officers talked among themselves about the suspicious circumstances of Kirov's death, pointing to Stalin as the instigator. He was made aware of these rumors and displeased with the way the matter had been handled.

For the next murder, that of Kuibyshev, he resorted to poison. The latter had made a number of mistakes in Stalin's eyes; as chairman of Gosplan he had opposed the arrest of his subordinates at the "trials of the Mensheviks" and the "prompartia"; he had also opposed the execution of Ryutin, and in January 1935 protested against the trial of Kamenev and Zinoviev. Ten days later, on January 26, it was announced that Valerian Kuibyshev had died of "heart disease". However, three years later Maximov Dizhovski, his secretary, was accused of poisoning him.

— The press praised "his intransigent struggle against deviations from the general line of the party." His hometown of Samara was renamed in his honor and the urn containing his ashes was placed in the cell next to that of Kirov.

NOTES

1. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 156.
2. **Ibid.** See also Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 120.
3. Orlov, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, **op. cit.**, p. 259 **sq.**
4. Bulanov described this type of poisoning in his "confession" to the Bukharin show trial. See **Boukharin's Trial**, New York, 1965, p. 480-485.
5. See below ch. 26 for the discovery of Stalin's black file.
6. Recorded interview with IP Istkov in New York in 1989.
7. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 158.
8. Lermolo, **op. cit.**, p. 73. See also Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 123.
9. Hyde, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 302-305.
10. Medvedev, **Let History Judge**, **op. cit.**, p. 161.
- 11 Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 306 **sq.**

[12.](#) Testimony of Olga Shatounovskaïa, in the interview with Vassili Roudich, **op. cit.** See also Khrushchev and Hyde's Secret Speech, **op. cit.**, p. 307.

[13.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 308.

[14.](#) AT Rybin, "Riadam v IV Staliny", **Sotziologicheskie isledovanya**, no. 3, 1988.

[15.](#) Secret speeches of Khrushchev.

[16.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 163.

[17.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 86-88.

[18.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 89-92.

[19.](#) Rapoport and Alexeev, **Izmena Rodin**, **op. cit.**, p. 277. See also Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 133, and Anton Ciliga, **The Russian Enigma**, London, 1940, p. 183.

[20.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 310.

[21.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 93.

[22.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 17-55.

[23.](#) **Ibid.**

[24.](#) Maximov Dikovski, **Boukharin's Trial**, New York, 1965, p. 679.

[25.](#) **Krasny arkhiv**, no. 68, 1935, p. 6.

23

The Stalin Institute

In 1935, **Krasny arkhiv** ("Red Archives") published an editorial titled "Revolutionary Vigilance". He quoted Stalin's vituperation against "archive rats", who "accidentally unearthed selected documents" – a paradoxical formula – recommending:

“Archival institutions must exercise special vigilance [...] in the use of historical documents. [...] We know that double agents and smugglers do not hesitate to commit fraud and forgery. »

Stalin's subordinates echoed him, and PP Postychev, a member of the Politburo, declared:

"Archival work is after all the sector of the bitterest class struggle. A Trotskyist or a nationalist will try to use and interpret this or such archival document not in the interest of socialism, but against it.

– »

He had no idea that when he spoke of "double agents and smugglers" Stalin was thinking of Blumkin; he was also unaware that it was Stalin himself who was committing "frauds and falsifications" and that he had created a Stalin Institute for the sole purpose of fabricating his "true biography" and glorifying his "revolutionary past". He had placed at the head of this industry of lies Lavrenty Beria, to whom he had entrusted many of his secrets.

*

Beria was born in 1899 in the remote western village of Megrelia of the Georgia. His parents were divorced and he had left home early in life to go to Baku; there, at the age of sixteen, he had become an informant for the Okhrana officer M. Bagirov. After the Revolution, he had continued to work for Bagirov, who had become an officer of the Musawar government's secret police in Azerbaijan. In 1919, Beria pursued the same job for the British Embassy. In 1920, during the occupation of Baku English expeditionary forces2.

– by the
he had gone to Georgia and become a security agent of the

Menshevik government of that state. When the Red Army had occupied Georgia, Beria had returned to Baku, where he had become the assistant of his former contact, Bagirov, then chairman of the Cheka in Azerbaijan.

On Dzerzhinsky's orders, in fact, several former Okhrana officers had been recruited by the Tcheka. In 1921, Dzerzhinsky had sent his assistant Kedrov to assess Bagirov's team; Kedrov recommended dismissing Beria, whom he considered untrustworthy, because he had worked for too many intelligence services. The advice had no effect,³ Dzerzhinsky trusting Bagirov, and Bagirov trusting Beria.

In 1928 Beria was transferred to the GPU of Georgia; he met Stalin there for the first time in the summer of 1931: the latter was then staying at his dacha in Tskhaltubo, and on this occasion Beria was in charge of security. Stalin certainly knew his past, because he did not confide his person to men whose history he did not know, and his photographic memory allowed him to store information on a large number of people. Moreover, Beria had been recommended to him by Bagirov, whom he trusted and whom he had commissioned to write his fake biography.

Stalin thought he could use Beria and showed his approval by frequently calling him **karge bicho**, "good guy" in Georgian.

—

Shortly after his return to Moscow, Stalin summoned the leaders of the party in the Caucasus and, incidentally, mentioned that he had appointed Beria as second secretary of the party's Transcaucasian committee. He faced several objections: "I will certainly not work with this charlatan!" protested the first secretary, Lavrenty Kartvelishvili. Stalin's proposal was therefore not approved. This kind of insubordination was still tolerated in 1931, but Stalin did not take it for granted. "Okay, well, we'll settle the matter in the ordinary way," he retorted.

After the meeting, the Caucasian chiefs went to see Ordzhonikidzé, who had not taken part in it; he explained that he had not wanted to attend the "coronation Ordzhonikidze, in fact, knew the past of the person concerned. "I have been telling Stalin for a long time that Beria is a crook, but he does not want to listen and no one can change his mind." Three months later, Stalin appointed Beria first secretary of the Communist Party of Georgia, then first secretary of the entire Transcaucasian Federation.

—

In July 1935, Beria gave a speech in Tbilisi, the old Tiflis, where he criticized certain party leaders and in particular Avel Enukidjé, an old friend of Stalin, who "had distorted certain historical facts and events". He stated that he had already collected documents from the history of party organizations and was "assigned to explain **certain questions** from the history of Bolshevik organizations in Transcaucasia and Georgia". He criticized historians, because "nothing written so far reflects the true and real role of Comrade Stalin, who led the Bolshevik fight in the Caucasus for many years."

The Congress decided "to further stimulate the vigilance of all party organizations in Georgia against attempts to distort Bolshevism and to establish the Stalin Institute to study the life of Stalin"⁶. —

Beria also cited the 1931 article where Stalin urged "vigilance against Trotskyists and all other falsifiers". —

Stalin instructed Beria to "select" materials and documents for his new biography and to "purge" the archives of any documents that could link him to the Okhrana, such as the "Kutyepov documents", forgeries created by former officers of the Okhrana to discredit him, he said. —

Beria pretended to believe Stalin's claims, but he knew that there were no "Kutiepov documents" and that Stalin was worried about the real Okhrana documents; he and his subordinates were ordered to hand over to Stalin all documents bearing the name of Iosif Djougashvili⁹. —

Dzerzhinsky had given Stalin all the files of the former agents of the Okhrana he had recruited for the Cheka, which exposed them to blackmail, and that was the reason why Stalin trusted Beria and Bagirov. Whenever Stalin's documents in the Okhrana were found, they therefore handed them over to him, pretending to believe that they believed them to be the "Kutiepov documents". Stalin's file at the Okhrana in Tiflis, found in 1925, had turned out to be devoid of compromising documents, since it had already been purged by Eremin in 1910. Then, the file of the Okhrana in Baku was also found in early 1930s by Bagirov, head of the GPU of Azerbaijan, who also handed it over to Stalin.

It was different for the Batum file. Found at the beginning of 1930s in the archives of the Okhrana of this city by the historian Sepp, author of **The October Revolution Through Documents**, he was

handed over to Beria, who sent it to Stalin; it contained documents on informer Iosif Djougashvili. Stalin thanked Beria, asserting that these were the "Kutyepov documents", and therefore ordered Beria to arrest and execute Sepp, which was done upon the latter's return to Tbilisi.

In the mid-1930s, another researcher found a file containing the secret reports of Iosif Djougashvili, in the archives of the Okhrana of Kutays; he handed it over to Basho Kabulov, a common criminal who had become head of the NKVD there. The latter handed it over to Beria, who also handed it over to Stalin¹⁰. The name of this researcher remains unknown.

From July 1935, **Pravda** began to publish Beria's articles on "Stalin's leadership role in the revolution". Stalin had at that time his files from Baku, Batum, Tiflis (Tbilisi) and Kutays.

But he knew that there was another, that of Saint-Petersburg, which Blumkin had tried to smuggle abroad. Beria and Bagirov wrote books about Stalin's revolutionary past, and the newspaper **Krasny arkhiv** published falsified Okhrana documents, made at the Kremlin printing house by Alexander Svanidze, the brother of Stalin's first wife. All the annoying elements were erased there; flattering comments had been substituted for them. Seemingly flawless, some of these falsifications were, however, absurd; thus Stalin had replaced the dates of the old calendar with those of the new one, and the report of Colonel Lavrov, head of the Okhrana of Tiflis, which had preceded the arrest of the Kurnatovsky circle in that city, had been aberrantly rewritten :

"According to an agent's information, the following persons belong in the social-democratic circle of Tiflis: an employee of the Physics observatory, Iosif Djougashvili – an intellectual – [...], a chemical engineer, Victor Kurnatovski..."

A list of other names followed. However, Stalin had not been part of the Kurnatovsky circle and his name had never appeared on this list, let alone at the top. Lavrov's report had been dated not March 28, but March 16, 1901, the difference between the old and the new calendar being thirteen days.

According to another falsified document, "in the fall of 1901, the PTSDR [**Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party**] sent Iosif Vissarionovitch Dzhugashvili to Batum as a delegate¹⁴"...

contrary, the Tiflis committee had then expelled Stalin from the party for intrigues and slander against its leaders. Nevertheless, another forged document, dated March 21, 1910, had underlined information that Stalin had **"always held a very important position in the revolutionary movement .**

" The truth was that in March 1910 Stalin had been summoned before an assembled party court in Baku to answer the charge of treason to the Okhrana; the members of this tribunal, as we have read above, were arrested before Stalin's appearance.

Stalin placed many of the falsified documents in the archives and had them indexed; their lies were repeated tirelessly in articles, books and theses. Stalin was exalted there as "the greatest revolutionary and the leader of the world proletariat". Stunned by the fabrications of the Stalin Institute, Trotsky wrote:

Never under the vault of heaven have we seen untruths invented such a scale. [...] And one of the main objects of this production is to fabricate a new biography of Stalin¹⁸. »

Many authors were forced to renounce their memoirs and works historical records, in contradiction with the new Stalinist versions: all writings in disagreement with the fictitious biography of Stalin were destroyed on his order. Avel Enukidjé wrote in the **Pravda** of January 16, 1935 an article of repentance on the "errors" of his first works about the Caucasian maquis. Stalin was not satisfied. "What more does he want? Enukidje asked. I do whatever he wants, but it's never enough. He wants me to admit he's a genius.

— In fact, what Stalin expected from Enukidje was not just praise, but unconditional support in his assault on the opposition. Shortly before the trial of Zinoviev and Kamenev, Enukidjé said to Stalin: Soso, it is undeniable that they wronged you, but they paid enough for it: you drove them out of the party, you threw them into prison and their children have nothing to eat. Soso, they are Old Bolsheviks, like you and me. Don't spill the blood of Old Bolsheviks! Think what the world will say about us! Enukidje later recounted that Stalin then glared at him, "as if I had killed his father, and he said, 'Remember, Avel, whoever is not with me is against me.'

»

In February 1935, ENUKIDJE was evicted from his apartment in the Kremlin and transferred to Tiflis. This half-measure did not satisfy Stalin, because ENUKIDJE knew the tenor of Nadezhda Allilueva's last letter and the reproach addressed to her husband: "I know what kind of revolutionary you are." Once suspicion germinated in the In Stalin's spirit, the decision to eliminate "the enemy" followed, albeit delayed. In early July 1935, Stalin's new sycophant, Nikolai Yezhov, attacked ENUKIDJE in Pravda for "political and moral disintegration . "

Nikita Khrushchev, then secretary of the party organization in Moscow, and Andrei Zhdanov, Kirov's replacement in Leningrad, made similar comments against ENUKIDJE²². He was arrested and accused of "treason of the country and espionage", but he was not executed until two years later.

ENUKIDJE had offended Stalin for equating him with the Old Bolsheviks Zinoviev and Kamenev; however, he considered himself infinitely superior to all the Old Bolsheviks, and he hated them all because he knew that if they discovered his file at the Okhrana, they would not hesitate to destroy it. On May 25, 1935, he ordered the liquidation of the Society of Old Bolsheviks and their publishing house. Soon after, the Society of Former Exiles was also liquidated. The members of these societies were arrested on the chain. Grigory Petrovski, one of his familiars, explained that Stalin "didn't like the Old Bolsheviks"; he felt comfortable only with people such as Petrovski, whom he kept by their files at the Okhrana.

In the deluge of printed tributes that swept over him, Stalin particularly appreciated a folicle from Karl Radek, **The Architect of Socialist Society**, in which he described the ideal future of the USSR at the end of the 20th century, so in the form of a lecture by a history professor devoted to "the great Stalin, the Genius of all mankind". Stalin ordered the printing of millions of copies.

NOTES

- ¹. Krasny arkhiv, no. 68, 1935, p. 12.
- ². A. Sarkisov, "Sudba Marshala", **Kommunist**, no. 147 (16426) June 22, 1988.

3. I. Viktorov, **Podpolshchik, vain, chekist**, Moscow, 1968, p. 71-77; also quoted by Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 231-243.
4. Interview with Nougzar Sharia, **op. cit.**
5. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 242 **sq.**
6. Beria, **K voprosy ob istorii bolshevitskikh organizatsii v kavkazie**, June 21-July 2, 1935.
7. **Proletarian Revolution**, No. 6, 1931, citing Stalin's article, "On Some Questions About the History of Revolution".
8. See chapter 20 the kidnapping of General Koutieпов.
9. Sarkisov, **Sudba Marshala**, **op. cit.**
10. Medvedev, **Let History Judge**, **op. cit.**, p. 319.
11. Written testimony of Raphaël Bagratouni, in the archives of ID Levine and in those of the author. Bagratouni reports that "Svanidzé had collected material for several years to make a biography of Stalin, but it was a ruse. At the head of a group of loyal Georgians, he destroyed in the Soviet archives compromising documents for Stalin, under the pretext that they had been fabricated by Trotskyists. »
12. Beria, **op. cit.**, p. 19 **sq.** See also Smith, **op. cit.**, p. 78.
13. See chapter 2.
14. Beria, **op. cit.**, p. 96 **sq.**
15. See chapter 2.
16. **See** footnote 14.
17. See Chapter 8.
18. Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. XIV.
19. **Ibid.**, p. 389.
20. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 298 **sq.**
21. **Pravda**, 8 June 1935.
22. **Pravda**, June 16 and 19, 1935.
23. See further chapters 26 to 29.
24. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 131.
25. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 194 **sq.**

24

"An old bear with a nose ring"

Stalin knew that Maxim Gorky, whom he had presented as "the great proletarian writer", was an old friend of Kamenev; however, he was preparing to have him appear with Zinoviev, as "enemies of the people", in one of his show trials, in the fall of 1936. Stalin also knew that Gorky would oppose the trial. The years he had spent in Italy had blurred the writer's sense of the realities of the USSR.

After his return in May 1933, Gorky had for some time supported Stalin; thus in an article entitled "If the enemy does not surrender, he must be destroyed", Gorky had endorsed the rigged trial of Prompartia; Stalin had given the order to print three million copies separately.

Gorky had also endorsed the rigged trial of the "Menshevik Union Bureau" of Stalin intended to use Gorky for his own glorification.

Yagoda organized visits by the writer to selected camps and prisons, to give him a favorable image of the Soviet penal institution. At first, Gorky was a blouse. He was taken to the Solovky prison camp in the north, and Gorky wrote a glowing article on the conditions under which criminals were reformed. Then, after visiting the labor camps responsible for building the Belomor Baltic Canal, he also endorsed the use of forced labor in the proliferating gulag system. Some writers then accused him of having contributed to the "moral enslavement of the country. Stalin's sycophants tried to induce Gorky to write a "biography by Stalin.

of the great Stalin". Yagoda, who showered the writer with favors, charged a NKVD officer, named Pogrebinsky. "I took on Gorky on several occasions, but he stubbornly refused to talk about the book," Pogrebinsky complained.⁴ Stalin pressed Yagoda to convince Gorky to write an article for Pravda entitled " **Lenin** and Stalin", on the occasion of the seventeenth anniversary of the October Revolution, but Gorky again refused. He also refused to write articles against Kamenev and

Zinoviev, whom Stalin accused of having fomented the assassination of Kirov and other crimes.

At Gorky's insistence, Stalin released Kamenev from prison in 1933 and allowed him to return to Moscow, where he was appointed vice-president of the Academia publishing house, presided over by Gorky; the latter planned to republish works by great Russian writers, including **The Possessed** and **The Brothers Karamazov**, by Dostoyevsky⁶. Stalin considered Dostoyevsky's books to be dangerous, and in a sense they were, some of their characters, such as himself. Russian readers would be tempted to recognize their leaders there.

Relations between Stalin and Gorky suddenly deteriorated on January 15, 1935, when Zinoviev and Kamenev were again thrown into prison. Gorky asked for a passport to go to Italy; we didn't take it into account. At the end of January, David Zaslavski, Stalin's spokesman, published two articles in Pravda, accusing Gorky of encouraging "literary decadence".

Zaslavski, whom Lenin called "a notorious slanderer", had been an anti-Bolshevik journalist and a member of the Jewish Bund before the Revolution.

While Lenin's close friends were thrown into prison, he befriended Stalin. Gorky, powerless, found himself isolated from his friends. "I am very tired," he confided to I. Shkapa, who was to be arrested soon after. "It's as if I was locked in a pen. I can't jump over it.

Surrounded... trapped... Neither forward nor backward! I'm not used to this! »

In a letter to Romain Rolland, Gorky complained of being like "an old bear with a ring in his nose¹⁰".

On July 27, 1935, Kamenev was secretly sentenced to ten years in prison for planning "an attempt on Stalin's life". Gorky in deeply troubled. In July 1935 he was invited to the International Congress of Writers for the Defense of Peace in Paris, but on Moscow's orders an NKVD agent, Maria Koudasheva, Romain Rolland's own wife, visited Gorky in that exact moment, and his trip was cancelled. Gorky wrote letters to Stalin protesting against the persecution of Kamenev and other Old Bolsheviks, without receiving a reply.

Other letters, which the writer sent abroad, were intercepted and

handed over to Stalin. Gorky charged Mikhail Koltsov, then **Pravda** correspondent in Paris, with his request to André Gide and Louis Aragon to visit him. Aragon noted that:

"The tone of Gorky's calls, which we received through Koltsov, had changed. We recognize in it the fear of death. » —

Gorky feared that his "archives", a suitcase of letters he had received of various people, fall into Stalin's hands and put his correspondents in danger. Before returning to the USSR, he had therefore entrusted it to Baroness Maria or Moura Boudberg, alias Maria Zakrevskaïa Benkendorf, who had been part of his circle of friends for several years and who had taken on secretarial work on his behalf. However, at the beginning of 1918, she had become an agent of the Tcheka and had been involved in the "Lockhart conspiracy", having become the mistress of the English diplomat Lockhart. She had then been dispatched to the West to gather information on Gorky's friends and Western intellectuals. After Gorky's return to the USSR, Moura Boudberg moved to London and became the mistress of HG Wells, who had been indiscreet about it.

— In 1934, Wells met Stalin and described him, surprisingly, as "a benevolent man" who "owes his position to the fact that no one is afraid of him and that everyone trusts him". —

In the summer of 1933, Gorky wanted to take back from Moura Boudberg the suitcase he had had entrusted. His wife, Ekaterina Peshkova, visited Budberg in London, but she refused to return the suitcase, knowing that Stalin wanted Gorky's personal archives. Archives were becoming an obsession of Stalin; in 1937, the NKVD thus attempted to steal Trotsky's papers in Norway, then succeeded in stealing his files from the International Institute of Social History in Paris, where Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son, headed a Trotskyist organization. —

Also in 1936, Stalin ordered the NKVD to confiscate all of Gorky's letters from Osip Pianitsky's archives; in the same vein, an NKVD officer summoned Mura Budberg to hand over to Stalin the suitcase of archives belonging to Gorky; for that, a special wagon would accompany her to the border post of Negoreloe and to Moscow, before bringing her back. So was done, and in 1936 Moura Boudberg returned to London. —

Gorky and his correspondents were now in peril. Knowing that the writer was urging his friends Gide and Aragon to come to Moscow, the NKVD gave Elsa Triolet, wife of Aragon, by her maiden name Elisaveta Kagan, the order to delay the departure; she couldn't. However, she managed to make the boat trip to Leningrad, where she wanted to visit her sister, Lilia Brik, former mistress of the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky.

Lilia Brik and her new lover, Vitaly Primakov, the head of the Leningrad military district, then occupied a large luxurious apartment and they were the darling of the city. Primakov, legendary hero of the Red Cossacks during the Civil War, had left his Jewish wife, Anna Yakovlevna Kirchenblat, and their six-year-old son, Yevgeny.

The latter was to become an agent of the MGB, then of the KGB, specializing in Arab countries and anti-Israeli propaganda, then a senior Soviet counterintelligence official. After the collapse of the USSR, he became the head of the Russian secret services and, on September 10, 1998, he was appointed Prime Minister of [Russia](#)²¹

Elsa Triolet convinced Aragon to stay several days in Leningrad, which he later regretted: "We should have run to Moscow, where Gorky was waiting for us. But, of course, my sister-in-law held us back. — On June 6, 1936,

Pravda reported that Gorky had contracted the flu²³; it was not the first time that he was ill, but his state of health had never been reported by the press and he rose up vigorously; Stalin then had a copy of **Pravda** and one of **Izvestia** specially printed without the health bulletin, which appeared in the current edition. — In June, Gorky

felt much better and his doctors predicted a speedy recovery.

The writer impatiently awaited the visit of Gide and Aragon. "The shadow of Gide and his visit protects you", said Isaac Babel, one of his colleagues²⁵. Gide, learning of Gorky's indisposition, had delayed his trip to June 12, 1936. The day before, the Soviet writer said his trip and "not to arrive before June 18²⁶"; Ehrenburg, in fact, had been given the task of delaying Gide's trip²⁷. The latter arrived in Moscow on the 17th; at the airport he was greeted by Mikhail Koltsov; they went the next day to Gorky,

but it was too late: he was dead at 11:10 in the morning. His house was surrounded by a security cordon and the doors were closed. Aragon had been in Moscow since the 15th, but Elsa Triolet had persuaded him, too, to delay his visit to Gorky until the 18th, Stalin and Voroshilov visited him and he had been so happy that his condition had noticeably improved. improved; he had practically "rise from his coffin". Nevertheless, the rumor spread that Gorky had been poisoned.

Stalin instructed Yagoda to search the writer's house and the latter brought him back Gorki's diary. After reading it, Stalin swore and said, "You feed a wolf no matter how much he will always dream of a forest."³¹

Two years later, three doctors, Levin, Kazakov and Pletnev were accused of poisoning Gorki³². But half a century later, on February 4, 1988, the Supreme Court of the USSR overturned the verdict and closed the case "for lack of evidence³³". Alexander Novikov, a former NKVD officer, taken prisoner by the Germans during the Second World War, confided to a Frenchman, a fellow prisoner in Buchenwald, that Stalin had poisoned Gorky. The Frenchman having then asked why no poison had been detected at the autopsy, Novikov exclaimed: But don't you understand anything? The autopsy report had been drawn up **before** the death! This may only be an anecdote, but Birgit Gerland, a German communist, prisoner in the Vorkuta gulag, had met Pletnev there, one of the three doctors convicted in the Gorki affair. Released in 1954, she reported Pletnev's words: Gorky's state of health had suddenly deteriorated when he ate sweets sent to him by Stalin; and the two nurses on duty that day, to whom Gorky had offered these sweets, had died suddenly. In 1963, Isaac Don Levine, who had met Gorky several times in the 1920s, visited his widow in Moscow; he asked her if Gorki had died a natural death. She exclaimed, in a state of agitation: "It's not that, but don't ask me to tell you about it!" I couldn't sleep three days if I told you! »

NOTES

1. L. Fleischman, **Boris Pasternak v tridsatye gody**, Jerusalem, 1984, p. 30-33.
2. M. Geller, **Kontsentratsionny mir i sovietskaya literatoura**, London, 1974, p. 84-95.
3. M. Geller and A. Neckrich, **Utopia or vlasty**, vol. I, London, 1982, p. 290.
4. Orlov, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 266 *sq.*
6. M. Gorky, "Ob izdanii romana besy", **Pravda**, 24 January 1933.
7. D. Zaslavski, "Zametki chitatelia", **Pravda**, January 20 and 25, 1935.
8. Lenin, *op. cit.*, 5th ed. p. 441.
9. IS Shkapa, **Sem'let's Gorkim**, Moscow, 1964, p. 318 and 383 *sq.*
10. J. Perus, **Correspondence Romain Rolland - Maxim Gorki**, Paris, 1991, quote from Romain Rolland's diary. See also Michele Nike, **K voprosu o death M. Gorkogo**, Paris, 1988, p. 383 *sq.* P. Moroz, "Gorki v SSSR. V strechi v Gorkim", **Sotzialisticheskie vestnik**, 1954, No. 1, p. 15-18.
11. **Zinoviev Trial** (report), Moscow, 1936. See also Ciliga, **The Russian Enigma**, *op. cit.*, p. 283.
12. Fleischman, **Boris Pasternak**, *op. cit.*, p. 239-242. See also Nike, *op. cit.*, p. 345 *sq.* Georges Duhamel, **The Book of Bitterness**, Paris, 1983, p. 185 and 417.
13. Nike, *op. cit.*, p. 329 *sq.*, citing Louis Aragon, **Œuvre poétique**, vol. VII, 1935-1937, p. 96, 100 and 107.
14. See Chapter 14.
15. Nina Berberova, *op. cit.*, p. 261 *sq.* See also Boris Bajanov, **Vospominaniya byvshego sekretaria Stalin**, Paris, 1980, p. 95.
16. Hyde, *op. cit.*, p. 316.
17. Berberova, *op. cit.*, p. 264.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 259-265. See also Carmichael, *op. cit.*, p. 428 *sq.*
19. Berberova, *op. cit.*, p. 264 *sq.*
20. Rakhil Mdinazadjé, Russian émigré in Brooklyn, NY.

[21.](#) The author knew Yevgueny Primakov well: they were classmates at the Oriental Institute of Moscow (Arab section) in 1948-1950.

[22.](#) Louis Aragon, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, Paris, 1977, p. 115 **sq.**

[23.](#) **Pravda**, June 6, 1936, p. 2.

[24.](#) One of the special copies is kept in the Gorky Museum, Moscow.

[25.](#) Pierre Herbart, **The Line of Force**, Paris, Gallimard, 1980, p. 105.

[26.](#) Nike, **op. cit.**, p. 344, citing **Les Cahiers de la Petite Dame** (1929-1937), in: **Cahiers André Gide**, 1974, vol. 5, p. 539 and 547. See also R. Maurer, **André Gide and the USSR**, Bern, 1983, p. 53 and 96.

[27.](#) Ehrenburg reports in his memoirs the discovery by Khrushchev, in Stalin's archives, after the latter's death, of certain documents "with yellowed paper", which Khrushchev sent to him.

Ehrenburg does not say what these documents were, but one can assume that they concerned him and that Stalin used them against him. I. Ehrenburg, **Liudi, gody, zhizn**, Moscow, 1967.

[28.](#) **Izvestia**, 18 June 1936, p. 2. See also Nike, **op. cit.**, p. 344-346.

[29.](#) **Pravda**, June 19,

[1936.](#) [30.](#) June 20, 1936. See also **Kholkozik**, no. 6, 1936 and Nike, **op. cit.**, p. 335.

[31.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 267.

[32.](#) See Chapter 29.

[33.](#) A. Loginov, "Tri versii deathi Gorkogo", **Argumenty i facty**, no. 1, January 1989.

[34.](#) Nike, **op. cit.** Mr. Braun's letter is in the Nike archives.

[35.](#) B. Gerland, "Kto otravil Gorkogo", **Sottzialisticheski vestnik**, No. 6, 1954, p. 109 **sq.**

[36.](#) ID Levine, **I Rediscover Russia**, New York, 1964, p. 175.

25 They will eat it! »

In 1935, Stalin decided to organize a show trial to destroy definitely Zinoviev and Kamenev, whom he referred to as "**podlye 1 dvouroushniki**" ("**vile** double agents"), which implied that they were Okhrana agents provocateurs. He instructed Yagoda to gather the "proofs". In June 1935, he appointed Andrei Vishinski state prosecutor and gave him the starring role in the trial. He had known him in 1907, in Baku. At the time, Vishinsky was a Menshevik, but that was only a trifle compared to the rest of his file, which Stalin kept close at hand: there was the order to arrest Lenin, signed by the hand of Vishinsky. Moreover, the latter kept in his safe a red file sent to him by Stalin and which contained a letter signed by a Comintern official and the diplomat DZ Manuïlski, possibly addressed to Stalin, advising him never to trust Vishinski, "character without principles", who had "worked for the tsarist Okhrana"; the same letter cited the names of several "Baku Bolsheviks", whom Vishinsky allegedly betrayed. It bore in its upper left corner a mention of Stalin: "To comrade Vishinski. I.St3 .

— »

It was possible that Manuïlski had sent this letter to Stalin; he was not likely that Stalin had it made and communicated it to Vishinski to invite him to follow the general line and at the same time, to him himi himi himi make him bear the weight of the betrayals of the Bolsheviks that he would have himself betrayed. Whoever did it, the blackmail was effective and Vishinski a docile tool. The Old Bolsheviks despised him, calling him "human-faced rat"; he hated them back. Stalin had already made use of this animosity when, in 1928, he commissioned him to preside over the show trial of Shaky. Vishinski had given him satisfaction, and that was why Stalin entrusted him with this new role, scheduled for the

In preparation for the trial, Stalin also charged NI Yezhov, whom he had in 1935 appointed chairman of the Party Control Commission, to direct the interrogations of the defendants. The head of administration

NKVD politician GA Molchanov was given the task of supervising a team of about forty interrogators who would take statements.

Yezhov announced that, on Stalin's order, each interrogator should permanently keep on his desk the text of the law of April 7, 1935, authorizing the application of the death penalty to children twelve years of age and over. Three hundred members of the opposition, many of whom were parents and grandparents, were therefore taken from their prisons, camps and places of exile, to be sent to Moscow. Stalin expected to find among them enough people who, under pressure, would sign confessions to save their children and grandchildren.

Molchanov also informed interrogators that the Politburo had discovered, indisputably⁷, a vast conspiracy organized by Trotsky, whose members had assassinated Kirov and planned to assassinate Stalin, Voroshilov, Molotov and Kaganovich, with the ultimate objective of re-establishing capitalism in the USSR. It was therefore necessary to force the defendants to admit their roles in the plot, which Stalin had no doubt ended up convincing himself that it existed. Some of his subordinates dared to point out to him that many, both at home and abroad, were not ready to give credence to accusations against Old Bolsheviks. He answered them: "It does not matter, they will swallow it! »

Stalin created the standard scenario of the show trial: the truth was distorted, even reversed, but we recognized elements that lent him credibility – sometimes also, they revealed the process crudely.

This can be judged by the following facts. In 1930, shortly after Blumkin's execution, Stalin selected a GPU agent, Valentin Olberg, to infiltrate Trotsky's circle, gain his trust and assassinate him.

However, Trotsky mistrusted Olberg and expelled him. Stalin then decided to use Olberg differently: Molchanov explained to the latter that he had to serve the party by accusing Olberg signed a deposition according to which Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son, had sent him to the Soviet Union to organize an attack against Stalin; Lev Sedov appeared there as an agent of the Gestapo, with the knowledge of his father.

Stalin did not find Olberg's testimony convincing. He decided to have it reinforced by that of two other NKVD agents, Friz David and

KB Berman-Yurin. These would "confess" having met Trotsky at Copenhagen and being tasked with assassinating Stalin and other members of the Politburo. There were snippets of truth in this fabrication: an agent of the GPU, Yakov Sobol, had actually met Trotsky in Copenhagen, again with the aim of assassinating him, but the project had failed¹⁰.

None of the defendants in the upcoming trial had been accused of being an Okhrana agent. However, this theme and an element of Stalin's career in the Okhrana surfaced in the "confession" of one of the defendants, ES Holtzman. This one "confessed" "that in 1932 he had met Lev Sedov in Berlin and had gone with him to Copenhagen to meet Trotsky there:

"I accepted, testified Holtzmann, but I replied that we should not travel together, out of prudence, and I agreed with Sedov to meet him in Copenhagen at the Hotel Bristol. I went straight from the station to the hotel and met Sedov in the lobby. Around 10 a.m. we went to find Trotsky. »

Next, Trotsky allegedly told Holtzmann that it was "necessary to eliminate Stalin" and "to recruit responsible people capable of doing so."

An element of Stalin's career as a double agent pointed under this invention: he had himself gone to the Bristol in 1906 to meet an agent of the Okhrana, who had introduced him to the head of the foreign agency of organization, Arkady Garting¹².

The ace! this scenario was a pitiful failure. When Holtzmann's testimony was published in the Soviet press, Trotsky declared that it was nothing but a tissue of lies. The Danish press did the same: the Hotel Bristol had been demolished in 1917, fifteen years before Holtzmann's alleged meeting with Lev Sedov. The "Bristol Hotel scandal" prompted the

American John-Dewey Commission of Inquiry to take a closer look at the Moscow trials: the Holtzmann-Sedov meeting could not have taken place¹³. Stalin blamed his own blunder on others: What need set this meeting in a hotel? he shouted to the leaders of the

NKVD. You could have said they met at the station! There is always a station¹⁴! »

According to the scenario he had established, Stalin brought into the trial a civil war hero, Ivan Nikitich Smirnov, close friend of Trotsky. Stalin wanted Smirnov to confess to having received "coded instructions" from Trotsky to organize an attack against him. Smirnov rejected everything altogether, for the simple reason that he had been in prison since January 1, 1933. ID Agranov, Yagoda's assistant in charge of interrogating Smirnov, concluded, "I'm afraid we won't be able to indict Smirnov, he's been in prison for a few years." Stalin glared at him and replied, "Don't worry, that's all." Agranov then arrested another Civil War hero, Sergei Mrashkovsky, a friend of Smirnov's, and tried to use him to "break" him. Mrashkovsky suffered from mental disorders: he thought he was the greatest military strategist of all time, and Stalin knew how to use the mentally deranged; he had, in 1932, offered him the command of a large military district, on the condition that he attack the opposition and break with Smirnov. Mrachkovsky had refused. When he was arrested, he declared that he regretted not having deferred to Stalin's offer.

In a face-to-face with Smirnov, he told him: "Zinoviev and Kamenev have agreed to testify. If they did, there is no way out. »

Smirnov foot seized. 'I remind you, Ivan Nikitich,' continued Mrachkovski, 'that I made myself available to the party. It means I will testify against you. "I always knew you were a coward," Smirnov replied.

Several days later, Agranov showed Smirnov a statement from his wife, Safonova, testifying that in 1932 he had received "terrorist instructions" from Trotsky. Husband and wife were brought face to face; she burst into tears and begged Smirnov to save her and himself by testifying in court. "The whole world will have their eyes on you, they won't be able to shoot you," she argued. He agreed to testify on the condition that his wife would not be harmed.

Mrachkovski had lied: Zinoviev and Kamenev had firmly refused to recognize "crimes". Stalin raged: "Tell them that no matter what, they won't stop history. All they can do is save their own skins. Work them until they are crawling on their bellies, with their chins between their teeth." LG Mironov, head of the NKVD's economic administration, came some time later to tell Stalin that there was little hope of breaking Kamenev. "You

think he won't confess? Do you know the weight of our State, with all its factories, its machines, its army and its armaments, its navy? »

Mironov did not know how to interpret this question, but Stalin insisted on having an answer. "No one knows that, Iosif Vissarionovitch," Mironov replied, like a schoolboy in front of an examiner. It is astronomical. - Well! how would a man resist this astronomical weight? Mironov admitted he couldn't. So don't tell me anymore that Kamenev or any other defendant can stand it.

Don't come back until you have his statement in your briefcase. »

Faced with Zinoviev's refusal to sign a "confession", Stalin made him propose a market by Yezhov. Zinoviev was led into Agranov's office; Yezhov, Molchanov and Mironov were present. Yezhov led the interrogation, watching Stalin's instructions. He declared at the outset that Zinoviev should help the party "deal a crushing blow to Trotsky and his gang". Suffering from asthma and severe liver failure, Zinoviev was breathing heavily. "What do you want from me? ", he asked. Yezhov replied that the Politburo wanted him and Kamenev to testify in court that they had wanted, together with Trotsky, to attempt the life of Stalin and other members of the Politburo.

Zinoviev angrily refused. Yezhov then read him Stalin's conditions:

if he agreed of his own free will to appear before a public tribunal and confess everything, he would be guaranteed his life; if he refused, he would be tried behind closed doors by a military tribunal. In the latter case, he and the other members of the opposition would be liquidated. "Tell Stalin that I refuse," replied Zinoviev in a dying voice. Kamenev also refused to sign anything.

Yezhov then showed Kamenev the statement of one of the defendants, that Kamenev's son had planned to assassinate Stalin and Voroshilov. Kamenev jumped to his feet and called Yezhov a scoundrel and a gravedigger of the revolution; he left the room, his face contorted with hatred. Then he called Kamenev and told him that only his submission to "the will of the Politburo" could save his life and that of his son. Kamenev says nothing. Yezhov picked up his phone and ordered Molchanov to arrest his son.

In July 1936, Zinoviev asked to speak with Kamenev. Yagoda saw in this a sign of relenting on the part of the main defendants. He tried to credit this victory to his account, so as not to leave the benefit to Yezhov. He summoned Zinoviev to his office and authorized him to speak privately with Kamenev, not without first stuffing the room with microphones. Zinoviev suggested to Kamenev that it might be necessary to testify at trial, on the condition that Stalin personally promise that their lives would be spared and that their families and members of the opposition would escape persecution. Kamenev hesitated, then finally agreed, on the condition that Stalin made his promise in front of all members of the Politburo. Yagoda, Molchanov and Mironov ran to report the interview to Stalin, who rubbed his hands: Well done, my friends! Good game! »

A few days later, Molchanov and Mironov brought Zinoviev and Kamenev to Stalin's office in the Kremlin. Yagoda was already there. Stalin and Voroshilov were the only Politburo members present. "Well, what have you to say?" Stalin asked. "We were assured that our case would be discussed in the presence of the entire Politburo," Kamenev replied. "You have before you the Politburo commission qualified to receive statements," replied Stalin. Zinoviev then stood up and observed that many promises had been made for years and had not been kept. Voice broken and tears in his eyes, he pleaded for the abandonment of a lawsuit which would sully not only their persons, but the whole party, which would appear as "a pit of vipers and an abyss of intrigue, treachery and murder." Then he fell back into his seat, sobbing.

Stalin, waiting for the storm to pass, gave a speech that ended with these words: "You have only yourself to blame if this affair ends in such a sad and serious way that nothing can be imagined of pyre." Kamenev asked what were their guarantees not to be shot. Stalin looked at him in amazement and exclaimed: "Guarantees? What guarantee exactly? Would you like an official statement endorsed by the League of Nations? Voroshilov then intervened to say that the two men should fall on their knees before Comrade Stalin and thank him for saving their lives. "If they don't want to save their

skin, which they burst. To hell! Stalin paced the room. He called Zinoviev and Kamenev "comrades" and continued: "We Bolsheviks are pupils and disciples of Lenin, and we do not want to shed the blood of old party members." The tone of his voice was emotional and Zinoviev and Kamenev exchanged glances, then Zinoviev stood up and announced that they would agree to testify, on the condition that none of the Old Bolsheviks be executed, their families not persecuted, and no death penalty be pronounced for past membership in the opposition. "That goes without saying," Stalin observed.

The agreement was therefore concluded.

But Stalin was not satisfied; he wanted to extort from Zinoviev and Kamenev a last-minute "confession" about their Okhrana ties, and he continued to harass Yagoda for evidence that the two men had been Okhrana agents. Yagoda well knew that it would be impossible to wring the admission of such an infamous crime from them and that they could then refuse any deposition; he also knew that by "evidence" Stalin meant fabricated documents. It was easy to do, but he pointed out to Stalin that it would be risky, because Zinoviev and Kamenev would demand that these documents be submitted to independent expert review. For him, it would be easier to summon former Okhrana officers, who would say that they had recruited the two men to spy on the revolutionary movement. Stalin agreed, then changed his mind: all this would delay the opening of the trial and could even compromise it; the idea was therefore abandoned.

The trial of the "Trotskyist-Zinovievist nucleus" opened on August 19, 1936 in the October Room of the House of Trade Unions. The hall contained only three hundred and sixty seats, all of which were reserved for NKVD officers and employees; out of more than three hundred defendants, only sixteen were to be executed; but the others, with the exception of a famous scholar, Ioffé, would be executed "administratively". Stalin crossed out Joffe's name: "Release him, he can be useful to us."

Prosecutor Vishinski read the list of charges, while the president, Vassili Ulrikh, stared at the defendants; many NKVD agents had not forgotten his sadistic brutality when he was a member of the Tcheka.

In three days, the defendants described their crimes, including their roles in the Trotskyist conspiracy to assassinate Kirov and Stalin, sabotage industry and agriculture, and so on. When Mrashkovsky testified that Smirnov had been the leader of the "clandestine centre," the latter sarcastically observed: "You needed a leader? Fine, so that will be me!"¹⁸ The audience burst into laughter. Vishinski's indictment ended with a virulent tirade: "These mad dogs of capitalism killed our Kirov, they hurt our hearts... I demand that these dogs be shot.

Each of them! The defendants read their final depositions, previously approved by Stalin, who had crossed out all references to their revolutionary past, their links with Lenin and their positions in the party and government, and had inserted offensive passages such as "lies of society, traitors and murderers who deserve no pity.

After this self-flagellation, Kamenev asked permission to say a few words, addresses to his two sons; one was a pilot and the other was still a teenager (they eventually disappeared, too). "Whatever the sentence, said Kamenev, I will hold it to be just. Don't look back, go forward. Together with the Soviet people, follow Stalin. »

He sat down again and veiled his face with his hands; everyone was shocked, even the judges lost their stone masks. In a barely audible voice, Zinoviev read his final declaration, stuffed with Stalinist jargon: My failing Bolshevism has changed into anti-Bolshevism. And through Trotskyism, I arrived at fascism. Trotskyism is a form of fascism and Zinovievism is a form of Trotskyism. At 2:30 p.m. Ulrikh announced that all the

defendants without exception would be shot. However, there were NKVD agents involved in the affair as false witnesses: they were shot. Stalin had fooled everyone, including the NKVD interrogators, into believing that he would keep his promise to spare the lives of the defendants in exchange for their "confessions."

Yezhov, Yagoda, and the head of Stalin's bodyguards, Karl Pauker, watched the condemned men being led to the dungeons. Kamenev walked like a sleepwalker. They shot him in the back; he fell moaning. "Finish him!" an officer shouted, kicking him. A little later Zinoviev, in the grip of a high fever, was torn from his bed and forced to

get dressed. "We have been ordered to transfer you elsewhere," the same officer told him. The convict could not walk, and the guards threw a bucket of water at his head. However, even supported by his executioners, he could not stand up and fell. The officer gave the order to take him to an empty cell and, seizing his head by the hair, shot him with a revolver bullet. He was awarded a citation for "diligence in difficult circumstances²¹".

According to a rumor circulating in NKVD circles, the sixteen victims were thrown into a mass grave in the Kodynka fields. But there were many mass graves around Moscow, and the Kodynka fields may have been referred to because they were associated with a mass burial that had taken place there forty years earlier: in 1896, during the celebrations of the Tsar's coronation, hundreds of people had perished there, trampled.

After the executions, Stalin, Yagoda and Pauker went to the dacha of Stalin in the Caucasus, near Sochi. Before his departure, on September 1, 1936, Stalin had given Yagoda the order to carry out the execution of five thousand imprisoned members of the opposition; it was the first mass execution of party members. Stalin thus strengthened his dictatorship. Perhaps also this carnage was explained by fear: rumors had it that certain Old Bolsheviks had obtained his file from the Okhrana²³; it was therefore necessary to eliminate them before they could reveal it. He ordered Molchanov, the head of the political department, to inform NKVD interrogators that preparations for the next trial would begin soon. Molchanov called them together in his office and told them: "This year, don't think about the holidays. The investigation is not over, you have only seen the beginning! »

NOTES

1. **Krasny arkhiv**, no. 68, 1935, p. 7-12.
2. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**
3. **Inkvisitor**, no. 6, Moscow, 1992, p. 80-82.
4. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 37 sq.
5. See Chapter 18.
6. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 56.

7. **Ibid.**, p. 56 and 71 **sq.**

8. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 666. See also Boris I. Nicolaevski, **Letter of an Old Bolshevik**, p. 64, and Krivitsky, **In Stalin's Secret Service**, New York, 1939, p. 207.

9. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 73.

10. ID Levine, **The Mind of an Assassin**, New York, 1959, p. 26.

11. **Zinoviev Trial**, testimony of Holtzmann, Moscow, 1936, p. 155-178.

12. See Chapter 6.

13. Report of the Dewey Commission, **Not Guilty**, New York, 1937, p. 85.

14. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 66-69.

15. **Ibid.**, p. 105.

16. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**

17. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 88.

18. **Ibid.**, p. 159-165.

19. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 167 **sq.**

20. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 165-169.

21. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 170.

22. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 170.

23. See chapter 26 the rediscovery of Stalin's file.

24. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 170.

26

Fatal discovery in Menzhinsky's office

During preparations for the Zinoviev-Kamenev show trial, Yagoda instructed the assistant to the head of the political section of the NKVD, Isaac Lvovitch Shtein, to find in the archives of this organization the files of former officers of the Okhrana; he intended to use some of them as witnesses to the recruitment of Kamenev and Zinoviev, according to the scheme that Stalin had abandoned. sort Viacheslav Menzhinsky's — For these purposes, Yagoda had ordered papers, in the poisoned old office that had been closed and sealed after his death in May 1934. Moreover, it had been decided on this occasion to renovate this spacious office for the use of Yezhov, who spent a lot of time in the Kremlin organizing show trials.

Shtein, who was therefore Molchanov's deputy, had access to the documents of secret police chiefs, as did his predecessor, Rabinovitch, Dzerzhinsky's deputy, who had discovered Stalin's secret file and had been executed along with Blumkin. Shtein had to sort through Menzhinsky's papers before sending them to the central NKVD archives. In doing so, he came across the Okhrana file of Iosif Vissarionovitch Djougashvili. He opened it and discovered first a photo of the anthropometry department of a prison; it represented the young Stalin; many other documents seemed at first sight to confirm the revolutionary past of the "Great Soviet Leader". Stein exulted. He failed to call Yagoda on the spot to tell him that he had discovered papers of extreme historical importance. But he postponed his call and read the file. As he read, he was horrified: several of the documents he held in his hands showed that Stalin had been an important agent of the Okhrana. The most astonishing consisted of two letters: that of the director of the special section of the Okhrana, Colonel Eremin, describing for the benefit of the director of the police, Beletski, the highlights of Stalin's career; and that of Stalin to Deputy Interior Minister Zolotarev, in which he railed against Malinovsky's "treachery" towards the Okhrana and recommended his expulsion from

the secret police, proposing himself as the principal agent of the Okhrana within the Bolshevik party. –

Shtein gnawed at himself for several days: what to do with this appalling discovery? For someone as devoted to the Soviet state as he was, the blow was severe. The man who had passed for Lenin's combat comrade was therefore a despicable agent of the Okhrana who had exterminated the real Bolsheviks, Lenin's comrades. Purges, executions and trials appeared to Shtein in a radically different light. However, Shtein knew that he could reveal his discovery neither to Yagoda, nor to his superior Molchanov, two unscrupulous lackeys of Stalin. Shtein's only friends, those with whom he had worked since the civil war, were in Kiev: they were the head of the Ukrainian NKVD, VA Balitski, and his deputy, Zinovy Kastnelson. He took the file and took the train to Kyiv.

Assuming the documents were forgeries, Balitski and Kastnelson were at first incredulous; but after submitting them to the required tests, they concluded that they were genuine. Their decision was to do everything in their power to save the country from the former Okhrana agent. As members of the NKVD, they were aware of the extreme difficulty of their task. Stalin surrounded himself with an army of bodyguards and he had the powerful apparatus of the NKVD, with a multitude of spies and troops at his disposal. The only force eventually capable of deposing Stalin was the army, where Balitsky had trusted friends: Marshal Mikhail Tukhachevsky, first deputy commissar of defense and candidate member of the Central Committee, and Yan Gamarnik, also first deputy commissar of defense. and head of the political administration of the Red Army. Gamarnik was, moreover, a full member of the Central Committee. Balitsky entrusted them with Stalin's file and they decided to overthrow the dictator.

A conspiracy, led by Mikhail Tukhachevsky, was formed. As often happens in these cases, each of the conspirators had his own trusted friends; among the first to join them were Iona Yakir, commander of the Kiev military district and member of the Central Committee, IP Uborevich, commander of the Belarusian military district, and corps commander Boris Feldman, head of the main administration of the Red Army. A number of photocopies of

documents were made for each of the participants⁶. The most decisive was Colonel Eremin's report, which described Stalin's career.

Some officers insisted that Stalin be shot and his case then presented to the Central Committee. Others preferred that he be arrested and brought to justice, with his Okhrana file as evidence. They decided to lure

Stalin into a trap: he would be invited to watch the military maneuvers in the Belarusian district and then he would be arrested.

Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik wanted him to be tried afterwards by a secret party tribunal; they feared that if Stalin's ties to the Okhrana were disclosed, the discredit would spread to all of the Soviet Union's achievements, undermining its very legitimacy.

Corps Commander Feldman was of a different opinion: for him, Stalin had to be shot immediately and only later would his case be submitted to a party tribunal. And he was positive: any delay would jeopardize the conspiracy. "Don't you see where all this is leading us?" he cried. "He will strangle us all, one after another, like chickens. We have to act."

Tukhachevsky declared himself hostile to an action which would amount to the overthrow of the government and refused to participate in it. The delays and the increase in the circle of conspirators increased the risk that Stalin would get wind of the plot.

Indeed, Stalin was alarmed by a report that documents potentially dangerous to him had reached the head of the trade unions, Nikolai Tomskey. The information came from Mark Zborovski, an agent who had managed to infiltrate the circle of Trotsky supporters.

And Trotsky's son, Lev Sedov, had learned from the NKVD resident in Switzerland, Ignaz Reiss, that the Okhrana file on Stalin had been discovered and that Reiss intended to inform Trotsky about it secretly.

Trotsky himself considered Stalin's membership in the Okhrana a delusional invention and he strongly advised his son not to take this news seriously. Nevertheless, Lev Sedov mentioned the information in front of Zborovski and even mentioned Tomskey's name. The American writer and journalist Isaac Don Levine also learned about it from the entourage of Lev Sedov⁸.

Stalin's reaction was immediate. On August 23, 1936, Vishinski had, at the last session of the Zinoviev-Kamenev trial, mentioned that Tomskey was a suspect in an "anti-Soviet conspiracy" case and that

his case was under investigation. That day, Stalin left, a bottle of wine under his arm, to visit Tomsy at his dacha in Bolshevo, near Moscow; no doubt he hoped that the alcohol would loosen his host's tongue about this secret file. For some time Tomsy and Stalin talked alone in the former's office. Suddenly the door opened and Stalin rushed out, followed by Tomsy, who showered him with insults. The car of Stalin and his bodyguards started. A few minutes later, Youry, Tomsy's son, heard a shot: his father had committed suicide⁹.

NOTES

¹. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.** See also recorded interview with RS Osinina (Svechinsky's aunt, who had been secretary to Balitsky, Katznelson and Shtein at the Kharkov GPU before 1934), in Haifa, Israel, August 18, 1975. Her recollections of Shtein were clear. See also FD Volkov, **op. cit.**, p. 18.

². See chapter 22.

³. See Chapter 19.

⁴. This photo was later published by Stalin as a photo of prison, taken in 1913.

⁵. See chapter 10.

⁶. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**, p. 35.

⁷. Rapoport and Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 359.

⁸. Levine, **Stalin Suspected of Forcing Trials to Cover his Past**, **op. quoted**, and Levine's interview with the author.

⁹. Robert C. Tucker, ed., **Stalinism**, New York, 1977, p. 213.

27

The "Tukhachevsky file"

While Marshal Tukhachevsky and his group of officers waited for the opportune moment to depose Stalin, the latter, knowing nothing of the conspiracy, fabricated and accumulated "evidence" for a new show trial in which Tukhachevsky would be the main accused. He harbored, in fact, an old grudge against the Marshal; he had begun to collect the pieces of what he called "the Tukhachevsky file". During the First World War, Tukhachevsky, an officer in the Russian army, had been taken prisoner by the Germans; after the war he returned to Russia, joined the Bolshevik Party and joined the ranks of the Red Army. Because of his Polish name, Lenin and Trotsky had appointed him commander-in-chief of the front of

Warsaw during the Russo-Polish war of 1920. And Tukhachevsky had blamed Stalin's defeat for Warsaw; the latter had, in fact, deferred Trotsky's order to send the 1st cavalry regiment to support the Red Army. Stalin, in retaliation, called Tukhachevsky "the demon of civil war".

In 1926, Stalin fabricated an anonymous letter to Mikhail Frunze, the Commissar of Defense, deploring Tukhachevsky's command; Frunze wrote in the margin: "The party has always trusted Comrade Tukhachevsky, trusts him now and will trust him in the future." After Blumkin's execution in December 1929, several hundred former Tsarist officers were arrested in preparation for the show trial of General Kutieпов.

Two of them had signed depositions that they had participated in a "monarchist conspiracy" led by Tukhachevsky.

Stalin had sent these depositions to Sergo Ordzhonikidze with these words: "I ask you to take note of this. Since it's not impossible, so it's possible. »

Then, in 1935, the NKVD received a report of a plot in the Army red, led by a "general Tourguev". However, in 1931, Tukhachevski had gone to Germany on an official mission, under the pseudonym of "

Turguev". Yagoda judged this information "not very serious" and had it classified in the archives.² But for Stalin, this "material" was highly serious.

On March 31, 1935, **Pravda** published an article by Tukhachevsky analyzing Hitler's aggressive intentions and predicting that the Führer would start a war by attacking European countries and the Soviet Union. The article provoked a storm of protests in Berlin and the government and the press accused the author of fomenting a German-Soviet conflict. Tukhachevski was unaware that Stalin had started a secret policy of alliance with Hitler, while the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Maxim Litvinov, was pursuing a policy of European union against German fascism³. Stalin tried to reassure the Germans: Litvinov's campaign was coming to an end. In late spring 1935, shortly after the publication of Tukhachevsky's article, a Soviet official attending a reception at the German consulate in Kiev piqued the attention of diplomats by confidently predicting that history would soon invalidate the policy of Litvinov and would make German-Soviet friendship a reality, because "it would be absurd for Soviet Russia to ally itself with a 'degenerate' country like France! ". Neither Litvinov nor Tukhachevsky then suspected that Stalin, through secret agents, was working on an alliance with Hitler.

In fact, Stalin had begun courting Hitler when, on June 30, 1934, the latter liquidated Ernst Röhm, leader of the SA and the German Brown Shirts. For Stalin, this Night of the Long Knives made Hitler a brother. The NKVD and the Soviet military counterintelligence expressed the opinion that the elimination of Röhm revealed a deep crisis in Germany and announced the imminent fall of Hitler. For Stalin, it was quite the opposite: the suppression of Röhm consolidated his power. —

Röhm's assassination may even have encouraged Stalin to purge the Old Bolsheviks and assassinate Kirov. Stalin then instructed his personal agent, David Kandelaki, a member of the Batum criminal gang to which he had belonged some thirty years earlier, to establish friendly contacts with those familiar with Hitler. Neither Litvinov nor

Tukhachevsky, of course, could not adhere to this objective, for ideological, political and strategic reasons.

Defendants in the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial had given statements about a "military terrorist group" of Red Army officers, and they had cited the names of Shmidt, Kuzmichev and others, which enriched the "evidence" of the "Tukhachevsky dossier". The cases of these officers were under investigation. Shmidt, commander of a tank division in the Kiev military district, and B. Kuzmichev, chief of staff of an air force unit, were arrested in early June 1936 and charged with participation in "a counter-revolutionary plot". Shmidt had been in the opposition during the 1920s; during a conference in the Kremlin, he had gone so far as to walk towards Stalin, seizing the hilt of his sword and threatening to cut off his ears; he had turned pale, but had said nothing. The episode was then passed off as a joke; however Stalin, when he suffered, did not display a keen sense of humor – and he had the memory of an elephant.

Shmidt was interrogated by the head of the special department, MI Gay, and his deputy, ZM Oushakov. When the commander of the Kyiv military district, Iona Yakir, was allowed to see Shmidt, he barely recognized him. Shmidt told him that his "confession" had been wrung from him by torture. Yakir reported this interview to Voroshilov, but the latter did not reveal to him that after his intervention, Shmidt had been forced to declare that he had fomented a revolt in his tank division on the instructions of the even ____.

Yakir¹⁰ In August 1936, Vitaly Primakov, deputy district commander soldier from Leningrad, was arrested. It was at his place that Louis Aragon and Elsa Triolet had stayed, a few days before Gorky's death. Whether Primakov was aware of Stalin's vindictiveness against Gorky will never be known, but the primary reason for his arrest was Stalin's determination to liquidate "Tukhachevsky's nest" by forcing his friends, including Primakov, to sign testimonies implicating the Marshall. At the beginning of September 1936, another friend of Tukhachevsky, Viktor Putna, the military attache in London, was recalled to Moscow and put under lock and key. The "Tukhachevsky dossier" grew and the noose tightened around the neck of the

At the end of 1936, the USSR found itself in a strange situation: two groups fought there in mortal combat for their survival. One was

armed with authentic Okhrana documents showing that Stalin had been an agent provocateur and the other with fabricated documents, including the "Tukhachevsky dossier" and its fraudulent evidence of "treason". Stalin was unaware that his black dossier was in Tukhachevsky's hands and Tukhachevsky was unaware that he was Stalin's next victim. The advantage belonged to whoever attacked first.

During the Zinoviev-Kamenev show trial, the defendants had cited the names of party functionaries, Bukharin, Rykov, Pyatakov, Radek, Ouglanov, as many men as Stalin intended to summon with Tukhachevsky. However, he ran into opposition from Ordzhonikidze and several members of the Politburo and the Central Committee, Kossior, Choubar and Postyshev. On September 10, 1936, a paragraph in **Pravda** announced that the investigation of the cases of Bukharin and Rykov was closed, of Yagoda for lack of evidence. In mid-September Stalin received the report on the criminal . popular reaction to the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial; Yagoda also mentioned the reaction of foreign public opinion, for which the "Bristol Hotel scandal" reinforced the feeling that the trial was only a low revenge of Stalin against his political enemies. Yagoda also drew Stalin's attention to the growing sympathy of the population for the defendants and the appearance on factory walls of slogans such as: "Down with the murderer of the October leaders!" and "What a pity they didn't finish off that Georgian skunk!" Stalin flew into one of his rages. He interpreted Yagoda's report as an invitation not to pursue his show trials and, in particular, to abandon his project concerning Tukhachevsky.

He was unhappy with Yagoda's services anyway, especially because Kirov's murder had been poorly organized and because Yagoda had failed to fabricate proof of links between Zinoviev, Kamenev and the Okhrana. Discontent, as always, changed with Stalin into suspicion of disloyalty. On September 25, he sent a telegram to members of the Politburo, also signed by his new combat comrade, Andrei Zhdanov:

We consider it absolutely necessary and urgent that comrade Yezhov be appointed head of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Yagoda clearly did not prove up to the task

consisting in unmasking the Trotskyist-Zinovievist bloc. The GPU is four years behind in this case. All party functionaries and most NKVD agents in the region discuss it¹⁶. »

Stalin thus let it be understood that the organs of state security should have denounced the members of the opposition as early as 1932, the year of the "Ryutin platform". Yagoda was transferred to the post of Commissar of Communications, and Yezhov took his place.

At the end of 1936, Ryutin was still alive, in the special prison of Suzdal, where he had been incarcerated since 1932; it was therefore difficult to accuse him of new crimes, but Stalin nevertheless decided to include him in the group of defendants, at the next trial of the "anti-Soviet Trotskyist center" scheduled for January 1937. He gave Genrikh Lyushkov the order "absolute secret" to transfer Ryutin to the Lubyanka, "in a separate train compartment, under reinforced surveillance, and in a special convoy". Upon his arrival at the Lubyanka, Ryutin refused to sign anything and asked for paper to write to Stalin; Lyushkov gave him three sheets of brown wrapping paper, of unequal sizes. Ryutin wrote that he did not consider himself guilty of anything, that he was not going to accuse himself or others, and that he was not afraid of death. Stalin filed the letter, dated November 4, 1936, in his personal archives, where it was not found until after his death, and published under the glasnost **In late** 1936, Lyushkov¹⁷.

dialed a phone number for his Lubyanka office and handed the receiver to Ryutin; it was to be the last time he and his family could talk to each other. The stratagem had no effect: Ryutin still refused to sign any "testimony". His resistance deprived Stalin of the pleasure of humiliating his old enemy. On January 10, 1937, the prisoner was summoned before the president of the military college of the Supreme Court, Vassili Ulrikh, who noted that the accused refused to give any deposition or "final testimony"¹⁸.

Immediately after the death sentence was pronounced, Ryutin was taken to the basement; he was executed with a bullet to the back of the neck. His two sons suffered the same fate.

His wife was imprisoned and tortured to death in 1947. Only his daughter Liouba survived them.

According to Stalin's plan, the defendants of the "anti-Soviet Trotskyist center" had to confess that they had wanted to "take the

power". When one of them, Karl Radek, was arrested, he complained to his interrogator Molchanov: "After all that I have done for Stalin!" How ingratitude! " He thought about the book he had wrote to the glory of Stalin and his innumerable anti-Trotskyist articles; he naively hoped for some form of recognition, unaware that anyone who, like him, knew the real reason for Blumkin's execution, namely the plan to take the case black overseas, was on the list of convicts am

Radek asked Molchanov to arrange a meeting with Stalin; Molchanov refused. He was subjected to endless interrogations, according to the so-called "conveyor belt" method, to prevent him from sleeping. Radek was surprisingly tough. At the end, when he found himself before Molchanov, he said to him:

"Very well, I am willing to admit that I intended to assassinate all members of the Politburo and put Hitler on the Kremlin throne. But

I will add a point of detail: it is that I counted among my accomplices a certain Molchanov²⁰. »

The latter took fright and transmitted to Yezhov the request for an interview with Stalin. Yezhov tells Radek to write a letter requesting the interview. The prisoner was taken to Yezhov's office; Stalin was present; he promised Radek his life if he confessed to having been an agent of Trotsky and if he denounced Tukhachevsky. Radek agreed, asked for paper and a pen, and composed an extravagant testimony about a Trotsky Hitler plot, detailing the roles of his accomplices. Delighted with this fabrication, Stalin gave the order to rewrite the testimonies of all the accused according to the version of Radek²¹.

Radek's fabrication will expedite trial preparations. Stalin, in high spirits, invited the NKVD leaders to his dacha to celebrate his fifty-seventh birthday and the eighteenth anniversary of the founding of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police. The press carried the wishes of workers across the country and members of "progressive circles" around the world. When the guests, drunk as usual, prepared to return, they asked Karl Pauker to reenact the scene of Kamenev's execution; it was one of Stalin's choice pieces.

The dictator also enjoyed the "comic" scenes of Pauker, who had been a barber and servant at the Budapest Comic Opera before the Great

War; he also liked Jewish stories, which Pauker told with a Yiddish accent.

One of the reasons for Stalin's good humor was his hope to add "criminal evidence" to the Tukhachevsky dossier. He had instructed A. Sloutski to disseminate abroad "proof" of Tukhachevsky's collusion with Trotsky and Hitler. Sloutski left for Paris, spoke with the head of the foreign department of the NKVD, Walter Krivitski, and told him that his mission was not "routine work"; it dealt with a case of "colossal importance" and he had had to come to Paris to take care of it, all business ceased: "We need two men capable of playing the roles of career German officers. must now. Nothing else matters."²³

Krivitski delegated to Sloutski his two best agents; he ordered them to play German staff officers and gave them a roll of film describing Germany's attack plans against Czechoslovakia; they would have to pass this document on to a Soviet official whom they would meet in a certain cafe in Prague. Then Sloutski ordered the resident of the NKVD in Berlin, a member of the USSR embassy, Israilovich, to meet "important officers of the German General Staff", who would hand him "spy information". At the same time, Sloutski informed the Czechoslovak police of the appointment of "German spies". They arrested the three plotters and Israilovich "revealed" that the two "officers" were in fact his agents in the German general staff. and that they had given him secret documents of this general staff, he was released Edvard Benès, president of Czechoslovakia, took these "secret documents" very seriously and was alarmed by Tukhachevsky's complicity with the Germans; he informed Stalin through his ambassador in Moscow. Stalin thanked him warmly and told him that Israelovitch was his liaison officer with the German general staff;²⁴ he also warned the English and the French, who also let themselves be fooled by this lie. big as a mountain.

Stalin wanted more: he devised a plan to supply the counter Czechoslovak espionage a suitcase full of "spy documents" compromising Tukhachevsky. At the end of December 1936, Slutsky arrived

Prague carrying a suitcase containing a photocopy of a "German military plan for the annexation of the Sudetenland", several false passports, a fake photo showing Trotsky in the company of a group of German officers, documents with Tukhachevsky's signature and the formula for making invisible ink.

Sloutski instructed an NKVD informant to introduce this suitcase into the apartment of a local Trotskyist named Grilevich, then he informed the Czech police that the latter was a German agent. Suspecting a provocation, the police did not follow up on the information.

Sloutski tried desperately to have Grilevich arrested, including by bribing police officials: to no avail. There came an alarming telegram from Yezhov: "Ivan Vasilyevich wants to know the result of

the operation. "Ivan Vasilyevich" was Stalin's code name - incidentally there were traces of his previous pseudonyms, "Ivanov", "Ivanovitch" and "Vassilyev". Sloutski knew that when "Ivan Vasilevich" wanted "to know the results", he had to be satisfied on the spot. He feverishly paced his office at the USSR Embassy, cursing the "cowards and shirkers" of the Czech police and calling them "drunks": "If they had been told

that Grilevich was hiding clandestine vodka, they would have come running, but when they are given a serious political affair, they stay there like sleeping flies. »

During a discussion on his return to Moscow, he was suddenly told by Stalin that it was imperative that Pyatakov confess to having personally received from Trotsky, during an interview in Oslo in 1935, the order to assassinate Stalin. Indeed, Pyatakov had gone to Berlin in 1935, on an official mission, to buy heavy machinery; according to Stalin, he had taken advantage of this trip to go to Oslo. At the next meeting, Slutsky pointed out that the hypothesis was improbable, since the Berlin-Oslo trip there and back would have taken at least two days and that during his stay in Berlin, Pyatakov had had appointments every day. with German businessmen, who would certainly have kept traces of these meetings.

"The objection is admissible for the train," retorted Stalin, "but Pyatakov could have made the trip by plane." Again, Sloutski observed that the airlines wrote down the names of the passengers and that it would be

easy to demonstrate that Pyatakov had not been to Oslo. Stalin grew impatient.

"It will then be necessary to say that Pyatakov took a special plane, he declared in a tone without reply. For this kind of business, the Germans would certainly have made a plane available to him. "And as he remembered the Bristol Hotel debacle, he advised Slutsky to avoid mentioning a hotel.

Slutsky was perplexed; why was Stalin stubborn in this story visibly unlikely of a meeting between Trotsky and Pyatakov at

Oslo? He did not know that Stalin had met Andrei Garting, head of the foreign agency of the Okhrana, in 1906 in Copenhagen and in 1907 in Oslo, and that he was once again reenacting his crimes by unloading his guilt on others. Slutsky shared with friends his doubts about the effectiveness of Stalin's plans; of course, these doubts would eventually be reported to Stalin.

The trial of the "anti-Soviet Trotskyist center", whose main defendant was Pyatakov, began on January 23, 1937 in the cold and dark October Hall of the House of Trade Unions. The judges, Ulrikh, Matoulevitch and Rychkov, sat before a handpicked audience, with Prosecutor General Vishinsky to their left. One after another, the defendants, including Pyatakov, "confessed" to their crimes of sabotage, espionage and attempted assassination of Soviet leaders on orders from Trotsky and Hitler. Radek mentioned in passing the name of Tukhachevsky who, he said, had not taken part in anti-Soviet activities.

When Krivitski, head of military counterintelligence in Europe, quoted more loud, read Radek's testimony, he turned to his wife and said: "Tukhachevsky is lost. She pointed out that he had been exonerated by Radek. "Exactly," he replied, "does he need Radek's absolution?"

Do you believe for a moment that Radek quoted him without Vishinski's consent and this one without Stalin's consent? Krivitsky was right.

During the depositions, a fable took shape, according to which Trotsky had met Hitler and Rudolf Hess to organize an attack against Stalin; in reality, it was Stalin who tried to make Trotsky assassin and who maintained secret relations with Hitler through his emissaries. Indeed, during the trial itself, on January 29, 1937, Stalin's personal agent, David Kandelaki, met Hitler's, Dr.

Hjalmar Schacht, to probe the possibilities of a German-Soviet treaty. Two weeks later, on February 11, Hitler wrote to Schacht that if "Russia maintained her line of absolute despotism by the relay of the army", the treaty would become a possibility. —

The trial ended on January 30. Thirteen defendants were sentenced to death and four, including Radek, to prison terms. The first were shot the same evening. —

Soon after, the Norwegian daily **Aftenbladet** wrote that "Pyatakov's meeting with Trotsky was quite unlikely", since no plane had landed in Oslo in December 1935. Another daily, the **Arbeiderbladet**, **organ** of the party Norwegian Social Democrat, pointed out that in fact no aircraft had landed between September 1935 and May 1936.

Vishinsky counterattacked by publishing a document from the Soviet trade mission saying that planes could **land** in Oslo all year round, which was true, but did not change the fact that no planes **were there**. demonstrate that all the "confessions" of the trial, just as in the case of the Bristol Hotel, were only a fabric of lies. —

Pyatakov's execution was a heavy blow for Ordzhonikidze. Pyatakov had been Deputy Commissar for Heavy Industry for years and the illiterate Ordzhonikidze had deferred to him; he begged Stalin to spare his deputy, then he visited Pyatakov in prison and told him that Stalin had given him his word of honor that he would not carry it out if he signed the requested deposition. Pyatakov signed it. Ordzhonikidze realized after the execution that Stalin had cynically used him; he angrily reproached her for breaking her word. To intimidate him, Stalin had his apartment searched. Ordzhonikidze complained about it. "It's nothing," replied Stalin, "the NKVD is capable of searching my house too." Then he read to his interlocutor some denunciations against him. See what they say about you! ", he concluded. Ordzhonikidze swore and hung up. —

On February 18, 1937, eighteen days after Pyatakov's execution, Stalin ordered Poskrebshev, the head of his personal secretariat, to shoot Ordzhonikidze in his apartment. — At 5.30 p.m. Zinaïda, Ordzhonikidze's wife, heard a shot; she went to her husband's study and found him dead. She looked out the window and saw a man

was running on the lawn. She telephoned Stalin, whose apartment was next door, to tell him the news. "What a sneaky disease!" " ", exclaimed Stalin, feigning grief. "A man lies down to rest and he is the victim of a stroke!" The death certificate, which the Commissar of Health, G. Kaminski, and two others Kremlin doctors, Levin and Khodorovski, were forced to sign, declared that the cause of Ordzhonikidze's death was "paralysis of the heart". Kaminski was secretly murdered soon after and, a year later, the other two appeared as indicted in a trial.

Ordzhonikidze's body was cremated and the urn placed in a cell next to many others, in the alley leading to Lenin's mausoleum. Stalin ordered a solemn funeral for "our beloved Sergo" and Khrushchev delivered a oration punctuated by tears and anger, vituperating mysterious "enemies". "They are the ones who struck your noble heart! And Pyatakov, the spy, the assassin, the enemy of the workers, was caught in the act and crushed like a reptile!" ³⁶ At the party plenum in February-March, Molotov made dark remarks about "the present particular danger of saboteurs and spies who pretend to be communists."

In February, in Prague, Sloutski tried again to have Grilevitch arrested. He sent her coded letters, written in invisible ink, hoping that they would be intercepted and have him arrested. Then he went to Paris to speak with Alexander Orlov, Soviet adviser to the Spanish Republic, who was convalescing in a hospital. He informed him of Pyatakov's "flight to Oslo", of the mission of the two alleged German officers, of the provocation, Grilevitch and other bizarre machinations of "Ivan Vasilevich"; Orlov declared himself incapable of deciphering them.

Orlov then received another visitor, his cousin Zinovy Kastnelson, chief deputy of the NKVD of Ukraine on an official mission in Paris, who had been informed of his illness. Kastnelson told him what he knew about Shtein's discovery of Stalin's file at the Okhrana. He also revealed to her the officers' plot to depose Stalin. Finally, this information shed some light on Stalin's personality. The two cousins hoped that the military plot would succeed.

The following month, in March, Stalin ordered the execution of a large number of NKVD officers who had served under Yagoda. Yezhov sent all section chiefs other than Sloutsky and Pauker on "tours of inspection"; they never came back. At the first stop of the train outside Moscow, they were arrested and shot. Their deputies were also executed: during this period, some three thousand NKVD officers were executed. Molchanov's deputy, Shtein, who had discovered Stalin's file, committed suicide, although it is unclear whether it was at this time or somewhat later.

On March 18, 1937, Yezhov addressed new NKVD recruits and devoted his speech to the liquidation of the "nest of Yagoda", an agent provocateur of the Okhrana who had infiltrated the NKVD to create a network of spies there and who had tried to flee abroad with a suitcase full of **valiouta** ("values"). This new fabrication of Stalin combined two characters in one: the former Okhrana agent, whom he himself had been, and Blumkin, who had, in fact, tried to go abroad with a suitcase full of devices. Despite these deadly charges, Yagoda was not arrested until three weeks later, on April 3.

Brought before Sloutski, he declared to him: "You can put in my deposition that I said that God exists in spite of everything. And he explained to Sloutski, taken aback. It's simple: from Stalin, I deserve nothing but gratitude for my faithful services. From God, I deserve the worst punishment for breaking his commandments a thousand times. Judge for yourself whether God exists or not. »

Two trials were then in preparation, that of the "German spies" and that of the "agents of the Okhrana". Stalin delayed Tukhachevsky's arrest, waiting for "evidence" to finally be deposited in Grilevich's apartment in Prague, along with additional evidence to be provided to him by the German secret police. In December of the previous year, in fact, the former tsarist general NV Skoblin, an NKVD agent in Paris who had taken part in the kidnapping of General Kutieпов in 1930, had complied with instructions from Sloutski: he had transmitted to an agent of the SicherheitDienst or SD, the German military counterintelligence, "information" that Tukhachevsky was planning to depose Stalin and that he was plotting with generals and

German counterintelligence. He spread the same rumors in a circle of German émigrés in Berlin, the "Gushkov circle", itself infiltrated by NKVD agents, including Gushkov's own daughter. —

Skoblin's information reached Reinhardt Heydrich, head of the SD, who passed it on to Hitler, intending to sow suspicion in Hitler's mind about the loyalty of his generals. Heydrich also wanted to warn Hitler of the danger Tukhachevsky (nicknamed the "Red Bonaparte") would present if he came to power; A renowned strategist, Tukhachevsky was also a hardened Germanophobe.

Heydrich therefore suggested that Hitler fabricate false documents against Tukhachevsky, which would allow him to be arrested. Hitler allowed himself to be persuaded and ordered the production of the forgeries to be started and communicated to Stalin.

Heydrich's assistant, Janke, objected that Skoblin was possibly a Soviet agent and that his aim was to mislead the German government. Heydrich had Janke arrested and instructed the SD forger, Franz Putzig, to add Tukhachevsky's signature to documents stolen from the German general staff; he told his assistant, Behrens:

"Even if Stalin wanted to mislead us with the information of Skoblin, I'm going to provide the little uncle in the Kremlin with enough proof that his lie is the pure truth. »—

Putzig fabricated fifteen forgeries indicting Tukhachevsky⁴³ and Heydrich sent Behrens to Prague to submit them to President Benes; the latter in turn referred Behrens to an official of the USSR Embassy, Israilovich, the one who had previously received "spy information" from two bogus German officers.

In Berlin, Behrens showed Israilovich two of the documents bearing Tukhachevsky's signature and offered to hand over the rest to him. Israelovitch asked the price, but Behrens shrugged. Several days later, Israelovitch put Behrens in touch with Leonid Zakovsky, who introduced himself as Yezhov's principal, examined the documents and inquired about their price. Heydrich had recommended that Behrens ask three million rubles for it; Zakovsky accepted without haggling. The forgeries were in Stalin's hands in May 1937⁴⁴. As for the three million rubles, in —

large denominations, they could not be exchanged, the NKVD knowing the serial numbers⁴⁵.

The rumor of the Tukhachevsky plot spread in diplomatic circles. In January 1937, Czechoslovakia's ambassador to Berlin, Mastny, informed Benès by cable of a planned military coup that risked altering the balance of power in Europe; he alerted the USSR ambassador, Alexandrovski, who flew to Moscow to inform Stalin.

In France, the President of the Council, Édouard Daladier, questioned the USSR Ambassador, Vladimir Potemkin, on the veracity of a plot by the Red Army with the complicity of the Germans.

Potemkin cabled Moscow the account of his conversation with Daladier.

In May 1937, the "Tukhachevsky dossier", stuffed with forgeries, was almost complete; Stalin was only waiting for the effects of the Grilevich trap.

Slutsky was bombarded with irritated questions from "Ivan Vasilevich".

Stalin attached great importance to the famous Prague suitcase, because it involved not only Tukhachevsky, but also Trotsky.

After five months, Sloutski finally managed to have Grilevitch arrested thanks to a corrupt policeman. Waste of time: Grilevitch was released shortly after.

Ironically, Stalin lost all interest in the famous suitcase by then.

On May 19, 1937, an event forced him to admit that his network of lies around Tukhachevsky had been woven only in vain.

NOTES

- ¹. Rapoport and Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 468.
- ². Boris Viktorov, "Zagovor krasnoi armii", **Pravda**, 29 April 1988.
- ³. Gustav Hilger and Alfred G. Meyer, **The Incompatible Allies**, New York, 1971, p. 271.
- ⁴. **Ibid.**, p. 269.
- ⁵. Krivitsky, **op. cit.**, p. VII-XV.
- ⁶. Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 269.
- ⁷. **Zinoviev Trial**, Moscow, 1936, p. 36.
- ⁸. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 287 sq.
- ⁹. Alexandre Barmine, **One Who Survived**, New York, 1945, p. 89 sq.

- [10.](#) PI Yakir and YI Geller, **Kommandarm Yakir**, Moscow, 1963, p. 207.
- [11.](#) I. Dubinsky, **Primakov**, Moscow, 1968, p. 164 and 173.
- [12.](#) See chapter 24.
- [13.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, *op. cit.*, p. 290.
- [14.](#) **Pravda**, September 10, 1936.
- [15.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, *op. cit.*, p. 172 sq.
- [16.](#) Medvedev, *op. cit.*, p. 174.
- [17.](#) Arkady Vaksberg, "Kak zhivoy s zhivimy", *op. cit.*
- [18.](#) *Ibid.*
- [19.](#) Razgon, *op. cit.* See also Vaksberg, *op. cit.*
- [20.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, *op. cit.*, p. 195 sq.
- [21.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 197-200.
- [22.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 335.
- [23.](#) Krivitsky, **In Stalin's Secret Service**, New York, 1939, p. 216-218.
- [24.](#) Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", *op. cit.*
- [25.](#) Winston Churchill, **The Second World War**, vol. I, London, 1948, p.
224. John Erickson, **The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History, 1918-1941**, London, 1962, p. 433.
- [26.](#) Orlov, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, New York, 1953, p. 206-208.
- [27.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 181-183.
- [28.](#) **Piatakov Trial**, Moscow, 1936, p. 146.
- [29.](#) Krivitsky, *op. cit.*, p. 216.
- [30.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, *op. cit.*, p. 299.
- [31.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, *op. cit.*, p. 204.
- [32.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 182 sq.
- [33.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, *op. cit.*, p. 259 sq.
- [34.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 260. See typed transcript of an interview with P. Istkov.
- [35.](#) *Ibid.*, p. 260.
- [36.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, *op. cit.*, p. 261, citing the **Great Soviet Encyclopaedia**, 2nd ed., to "Ordzhonikidze".

[37.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 346.

[38.](#) Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**

[39.](#) **Ibid.**

[40.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 253.

[41.](#) Krivitsky, **I Was Stalin's Agent**, **op. cit.**, p. 237. See also **Dlya vas**, No. 48, 27 November 1938, p. 12.

[42.](#) **Panorama**, no. 56, July 3, 1988, quoting Paul Karell, **Hitler's War on Russia**, London 1966.

[43.](#) Lev Nikouline, **Marshal Tukachevski**, Moscow, 1961, p. 189-194.

[44.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 302.

[45.](#) **See** footnote 42.

[46.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 302.

28

The fake who tells the truth

On the night of May 19, 1937, during a routine search of the apartment of one of the Red Army officers who had been arrested, NKVD agents discovered a photocopy of an item from the file of Stalin at the Okhrana; it was Yeremin's letter to Beletsky, director of the police, containing a summary of Stalin's career in the Tsar's secret police. The document was handed over to Karl Pauker, head of the operational department of the NKVD, a stubborn character who spoke bad Russian. Stalin's drinking companion for many years, he had an absolute devotion to him. Without suspecting the danger to which this document exposed him, he immediately took it to his master.

Stalin instantly understood what this meant: his St. Petersburg Okhrana file was in the hands of military conspirators intent on shooting him down. He ordered Yezhov to declare a state of emergency, to suspend all entrance passes to the Kremlin, to surround it with NKVD troops and to post detachments of bodyguards around his office and his apartment. He explained to Yezhov that these extraordinary security measures were linked to the discovery of a vast plot to assassinate him. As usual, he pointed to a "false target": it was himself that we wanted to kill. He also ordered Yezhov to arrest many Red Army officers, whom he suspected of involvement in the plot.

His "view of the enemy" changed abruptly: he had been striving to fabricate false evidence of Tukhachevsky's imaginary conspiracy and suddenly he was dealing with a real conspiracy organized by unknown people. He suddenly forgot the "Tukhachevsky file" and, curiously, did not suspect at first that it was involved in the plot. He repeated his usual mistake, which was to impulsively attack those he suspected, thereby depriving himself of valuable sources of information. He ordered Yezhov to kill Pauker and his deputy, Volovitch, on the pretext that they were "Polish and German spies". However, by suppressing Pauker, he was depriving himself of information

crucial: the revelation of the exact place where Eremine's report had been found, which would have provided him with a guiding thread to unmask the plot. He had committed exactly the same blunder in 1929, when he had ordered the execution of Blumkin without first inquiring about the fate of the file that the latter had tried to get out of the country.

On May 22, 1937, before leaving Moscow for The Hague, Walter Krivitski, head of Soviet military counterintelligence for Europe, visited Yezhov's deputy, Mikhail Frinovski. He asked him what was the reason for "a succession of arrests and executions such that it seemed that the sky was falling over Russia and the whole Soviet edifice was tottering". Frinovski replied that the worst was over and that a vast conspiracy had been discovered in the Red Army, "a conspiracy such as history had never known". There had even been an attempt to assassinate Yezhov. But we got our hands on them all.

The situation is under control. Far from being convinced of this, Krivitsky left a capital devastated by alarm and confusion. The arrests, which followed one another from hour to hour, kept the army officers in an anxiety bordering on panic. —

Each new arrest risked exposing the conspiracy directed by Tukhachevsky because an officer put to the torture could reveal the names of his acolytes. The previous month, two friends of Tukhachevsky, corps commanders GI Gekker and II Garkavi, had been arrested. As Garkavi was the brother-in-law of Iona Yakir, commander of the Kyiv military district, Yakir arranged an interview with Stalin; the latter feigned good-naturedness, claimed that serious charges were pending against Garkavi, but that, if he was innocent, he would be released⁷. *

May began as usual with the grand parade in Red Square. Tukhachevsky arrived a few minutes before the start and took his place on the dais in front of the Mausoleum, on top of which stood Stalin and the members of the Politburo. Then came the Deputy Commissioner of Defense, Yan Gamarnik; he sat down without looking at Tukhachevsky; they both knew that Stalin was watching them from above. After the military parade, Tukhachevsky left Red Square, without waiting for the

manifestation of the civil. On May 4 he was to leave for London on an official mission; the trip was abruptly cancelled. —

On May 8, Brigade Commander AR Medvedev was arrested under the charge of Trotskyism and coerced by his interrogator, ZM Ushakov, to sign a statement according to which he had known since 1931 of the existence of a Trotskyist nucleus in the army, to which belonged the army corps commander BM Feldman, a friend of Tukhachevsky.

Yezhov ordered the arrest of Feldman⁹. The Chief of Staff of the Far Eastern Army, Commander Lapin, and the head of the Frunze Military Academy, Corps Commander Kork, were arrested on May 11. On the same day, Voroshilov informed Tukhachevsky of his appointment to the post of commander of the Volga Military District.

On May 19, 1937, Ushakov, a notorious sadist, accused Feldman of taking shares with Tukhachevsky and Yakir in a plot to subvert the Soviet state. He recounted twenty years later that he locked himself with Feldman in his office and came out with his statement. Ushakov boasted that he discovered the conspiracy and made history by forcing Feldman to confess, thus triggering a massive purge in the Red Army.

In truth, Stalin had on that date been disinterested in the confessions extracted from the soldiers to increase the "Tukhachevsky file": since Pauker had brought him the photocopy of Eremin's letter, he only thought of recovering his file from the Okhrana.

On May 25, before leaving to assume his new duties at Kouibychev, Tukhachevski went to take leave of Yan Gamarnik, Deputy Commissar of Defense and political leader of the Red Army. Gamarnik was suffering from a cold that day, but he went to his office anyway; that was where Stalin's file was hidden. Knowing that walls have ears, the two men said nothing.

Mass arrests and executions had decimated many of their friends; they no doubt wished that the opportunity to take action was at hand¹¹. —

Tukhachevsky was arrested the next day at the party headquarters in Kuibychev, brought back to Moscow by express train and taken to the Lubyanka. him confess as early as May 26¹³, questioned him¹². — Ushakov, Feldman's torturer "I made

"(that is to say the very evening of his arrest), he recounted twenty years later.

We can guess how: it was on a stretcher that they carried

Tukhachevsky at Stalin's house for personal questioning. It is unclear which of the officers revealed under torture that Tukhachevsky knew that Stalin's file was with Gamarnik: on the 28th, a detachment of NKVD troops went to the Defense Department and sealed all the offices. On the 29th, Voroshilov summoned to Moscow the commander IP Ouborevich, who was at Minsk; the latter's wife and daughter were present at his arrest. The next day, Voroshilov also summoned Yakir and had him arrested at the Bryansk stage of the Kyiv-Moscow train. A "black crow" (wagon-cell) brought Yakir at high speed back to Moscow, where he was taken to the Lubyanka. On the same day, May 30, the new head of the army cadre administration, AS Bulin, and his deputy, IV Smorodnikov, searched Gamarnik's apartment and took the keys to his safe at the Defense Commissariat. ; they found the file they were looking for and gave it to Stalin¹⁵. On May 31, they returned to Gamarnik, instructed by Stalin to kill him. They asked his wife to lead them to the bedroom; she was in the kitchen when she heard two shots; she went out and found Bulin and Smorodnikov in the vestibule preparing to leave; they said they were as surprised as she was by the shots and went back to the bedroom. Pravda **the** next day announced that "former member of the Central Committee, YB Gamarnik, having found himself affiliated with anti-Soviet elements and fearing to be unmasked" had taken his own life. Voroshilov informed Smorodnikov: "As for the funeral, the crematorium has already received orders¹⁸."

Several NKVD officers murmured that Gamarnik had been assassinated. Shortly afterwards, of course, Bulin and Smorodnikov were accused of being "Japanese spies" and shot.

Stalin finally had in his hands the dossier which had tormented him for so long. He now had to eliminate those who might have known of his existence. Shortly after the murder of Gamarnik, Orlov, the adviser to the government of the Spanish Republic, spoke with GK Zhukov, future marshal and Minister of Defense, who was visiting Spain. The latter reported to him that "Voroshilov had not yet recovered" from the discovery of the plot:

"Only Stalin's determination and Yezhov's promptness have saved the day. The guys from Yezhov shot them **[the conspirators]** unceremoniously. Klim **[Voroshilov]** said there was not an hour to waste. He was particularly shocked by Gamarnik's betrayal; it was incomprehensible, since we all considered him a saint²¹..."

—

From June 1 to 4, 1937, the Military Council, chaired by Voroshilov, harangued the cadres, cursing "the organization of renegades against revolutionaries". Stalin paced the room, hands behind his back, watching the reactions of the listeners. Those who expressed doubts about the validity of the charges were arrested during breaks²². — He rained down on Gamarnik a torrent of insults of unusual violence. On June 6, the army newspaper, **Krasnaya zvezda** ("Red Star"), called Gamarnik a "Trotskyist, fascist and spy." Stalin's dossier was, of course, never mentioned in the interrogations of the arrested officers; they knew that the slightest mention of the file would immediately send them to the platoon and that no interrogator would put it in the report. The generals were tortured and blood still flowed from their wounds when they signed their depositions: twenty years later, during the Khrushchev years, the brown spots on their confessions were confirmed to be dried blood. Meanwhile, Stalin changed the scenario: it was not Yezhov that the conspirators had planned to kill, but Voroshilov. The defendants were promised, in the name of the **rukovostvo** ("power"), that if they behaved "properly" in court, that is, if they confirmed their statements, they could hope to stay alive.

"The investigation of the cases of Tukhachevsky MN, Yakir IE, Uborevich IP, Kork AI, Eideman RP, Feldman BM, Primakov V.

M. and Putna BK, arrested on various dates by the NKVD, was concluded and handed over to the Court²⁵," Pravda reported on June 11. The trial opened the same day at 9 a.m. and ended at 11 p.m. Ulrikh again presided over the court. A guard stood behind each accused, and an interrogator near him. One by one they stood up and said, "I plead guilty, no claim. As soon as they deviated from their testimonies, Ulrikh shouted: "No lectures! Testify! »

As usual, bits of truth floated here and there. Thus, Uborevich testified that the generals had conspired with Gamarnik to attack Voroshilov, and that Gamarnik had said he would stand up, **krepko** ("vigorously"), against Voroshilov. In fact, the generals had instructed Gamarnik to attack Stalin in front of the Central Committee, to demonstrate that he was a hardened agent of the Okhrana. The word "**krepko**" itself was revealing: this incorrect term was mainly used by Stalin; it was therefore he who had written the "confessions". The generals were brief in their "final testimony": they asked for forgiveness and expressed their "devotion to Comrade Stalin". General Vitaly Primakov would have been an exception; arrested almost a year before the others, in August 1936, he is said to have given a long speech, the style and repetitive nature of which left little doubt about its author, Stalin: "[...]

What means did this conspiracy choose ? All means: betrayal, forfeiture, defeat of the country, looting, espionage, terror. What purpose? For the restoration of capitalism.

[...] The conspirators were people who had no deep roots in our Soviet country. Each of them has a second homeland. Yakir has relatives in Bessarabia, Putna and Ouborevich in Latvia, Feldman is no less linked to South America than to Odessa, Eideman has more links with the Baltic countries than with our country²⁶. »—

The idea that the conspirators were not Russian patriots, but Poles, Jews, Lithuanians, Latvians and therefore the conspiracy could be considered a foreign affair, suggests that Primakov's recitation was of stinee to another show trial which had aborted. It is not known whether Primakov actually delivered this **mea culpa** in court or whether it was written up and filed in the archives. In any case, all the accused underwent the death penalty: they were executed immediately after the trial.

This June 11, in the historic town of Dmitrov, not far from Moscow, thousands of court appearances, mostly common criminals, celebrated their release from the gulag; it was on the occasion of the opening of the Volga-Moscow Canal, on which they had been working. They received citations as **oudaniki** ("shock workers"); dated the same day, they were signed by Zinovy Kastnelson, head of the gulag²⁷. —

Stalin was unaware then that the conspiracy had begun in the summer of 1936, when Shtein brought Stalin's file to Kastnelson and Balitski.

From June 23 to 29, 1937, Stalin presided over a special party plenum; he was considering a gigantic purge and seeking approval for "extraordinary emergency powers" for Yezhov. Ossip Pianitsky, head of the political and administrative department of the Central Committee, objected that he had received information about illegal methods of investigation by the NKVD, under the responsibility of Yezhov. The next day, Yezhov declared that the NKVD possessed "irrefutable proof that before the Revolution Pianitsky had been an informant of the Okhrana" and suggested that the plenum cast a vote of no confidence in Pianitsky; he also proposed that the plenum delegate to the NKVD the investigation of Pianitsky's past, "in order to disentangle the truth from the lies²⁸". Ironically, Stalin had rediscovered in his Okhrana file a report (**Spravka bez**, June 5-18, 1912), in which he gave the names and pseudonyms of the most important Bolsheviks, including Pianitsky. About him he had noted: "TRANSPORT – in Leipzig, in the hands of Tarshis (Pianitsa) ²⁹. Tarshis was actually Pianitsky's real name.

Krupskaya, Lenin's widow, recalling the long friendship between Lenin and Pianitsky, tried to intervene on her behalf, but Stalin warned her that if she did not stop pestering him, the party would proclaim that it was not her, but the old Bolshevik Elena Stasova, who was Lenin's widow.

"Yes, the party can do everything," he told her. Pianitsky was therefore arrested on July 7 and shot some time later. His wife lost her mind and died in the gulag. Only his daughter Yulia survived. —

Thus, it was at the beginning of July that Stalin learned that the plot against him had begun when Shtein had brought his dossier to Balitski and Kastnelson. ~~Kastnelson~~ was arrested soon after and executed. Shtein committed suicide the day Yezhov walked into his office. Balitsky was arrested around mid-July, in a quite singular provocation centered on a puzzling forgery known to history as the "Eremin letter", which is still debated.

Stalin's purpose in having the "Eremin letter" fabricated was obviously to discredit the real Eremin document which described him as an agent of the Okhrana. Not without common sense, Stalin deduced that despite the mass arrests and executions, some photocopies of Yereimin's real letter still had to circulate, and that one of them would have ended up in Trotsky's hands. No doubt it also satisfied the

need to convince himself that the real report was a fake: he himself had described in **Provokator Anna Serebriakova** the double personality of the agent provocateur and this type of transfers.

On his way, he invented a stratagem which was in fact only a reissue of his exploit of 1930, when he had staged the "Koutieпов documents". He ordered, in a similar way, the kidnapping of a White Guard who resided in Paris, in view of a gigantic show trial with numerous defendants; he would force them to admit that they had forged Okhrana documents to prove his membership in that organization. The only difference was that he had his own file this time; he therefore used it for the manufacture of the forgeries in question.

It was not a new idea for him. As early as August 1917, he had accused the Provisional Government of falsifying Okhrana documents to smear "real revolutionary fighters". On his orders, his assistant Maksakov had taken up the accusation in 1927 and Stalin had reiterated it in 1935, in his article for the newspaper **Krasny arkhiv**.

In June 1937, he commissioned Alexandre Svanidjé, whose character was mentioned above in connection with the "Koutieпов documents" (cf. chapter 20), to fabricate a forged letter from Eremin and three other forgeries from the Okhrana. However, Svanidje intentionally introduced, at Stalin's behest, several obvious errors. Written on fake stationery from the special section of the police department, adorned with stamps and archival numbers, one of the fakes in question was supposed to have been addressed to the "chief of the Okhrana section of Yeniseisk, Captain Alexei Fedorovich Jeleznyakov. It looked like this:

MVD

CHIEF OF POLICE DEPARTMENT SPECIAL SECTION Top Secret Staff

July 12, 1913

#2893

To the benevolent Mr.
Alexei Fedorovich

Iosif Djougahsvili Stalin, who was exiled by administrative decree in the Turukhansk region, provided the head of the AGG [Governorate **Gendarmerie Administration**] of Tiflis with valuable information when he was arrested in 1906.

In 1908, the head of the Baku Okhrana section received a series of spy reports from Stalin, and after Stalin arrived in Petersburg, Stalin became an agent of the Petersburg Okhrana section .

Stalin's work was satisfactory from the point of view of its accuracy, but fragmentary.

After his election to the party's Central Committee in Prague, Stalin, back in Petersburg, joined the open opposition to the government and completely severed its ties with the Okhrana.

I am communicating this information to you, benevolent Sir, for your personal consideration in the pursuit of your duties.

Please accept, please, the assurance of my highest esteem.

Eremin's false signature resembled the real one, except for one detail: the descending initials which terminated it, instead of the clearly legible letter "n" in the real signature³⁴ .—

However, the authentic report had been sent, as we saw above, to the director of the police department, Stepan Petrovich Beletski, while the fake was addressed to "Alexei" Fedorovitch Jelezniakov, whose real first name was Vladimir and not Alexei; the error was obvious, knowing that the full names of Okhrana officers were published in a directory. There was another "error" in the letterhead, and the reference number had nothing to do with the numbers at the time. Moreover, the real letter from Eremin bore no number, since it was "absolutely secret and personal" and responded to a personal investigation by Beletski on a provocation by agent Iosif Djougashvili.

Finally, neither the names nor the pseudonyms of the Okhrana agents were cited in the internal correspondence, which bore the numbers of

reception and archiving. Stalin had kept the polite formula of the real letter from Eremin, which suited a civilian officer, direct superior of Eremin; if the letter had been addressed to Jelezniakov, he would have used the formula "Your Honor" and signed "Colonel Eremine", as befitted a correspondence with officers of the gendarmerie; however, here, he simply signed "A. Eremine³⁵".

Finally, it so happened that at that time the Okhrana did not know the pseudonym of "Stalin", but only his aliases, "Vassili", "Ivanov", "Ivanovitch" and his nickname, "Koba"; in 1913 he had used the name "Stalin" only once. Nevertheless, in addition to the bogus "Eremin letter", Stalin also had a report fabricated attributed to a former Okhrana officer in Yeniseisk, VN Roussianov, who had fled to China after the civil war and was living in Shanghai with his family, as a chauffeur for wealthy Americans. The bogus "Rusyanov report" was fictitiously addressed to MD Golovachev, "Chairman of the Council of Representatives of Organizations of Autonomous Siberia", and written in pen on stationery with the following heading:

Ancient
HEAD OF SECTION
FROM THE YENISEISK OKHRANA
March 13, 1935
No.51

This report was supposed to inform Golovachev that Stalin was an agent of the Okhrana and ended thus: "I believe that, in your hands, my report will be able to fully serve, now. I am sure that you will be able to make a weapon out of it in the struggle against the Third International.

— "It was signed

"major-general Roussian", and the final "n" of the signature ended in a curved initials identical to that of the fake "letter Eremine", which suggests that the two documents had been produced by the same hand in the alleged "Stalin Institute". The "Rusyanov report" cited four Okhrana documents, which were attached to it, including the "Eremin letter", a forged letter from Rusyanov to AT Vasilyev, director of the police department, and two reports from an agent named David, October 10, 1915 and January 12, 1916. These alleged

Turukhansk" to the "head of the Okhrana section in Yeniseisk". They described events that had taken place, but not in Turukhansk, and not on those dates. They had taken place in Narym, where Stalin had been in exile for a short time and where he had maintained friendly relations with an agent of the Okhrana, actually named Kibirov, which had earned him the reprimand of a "tribunal of comrades" in exile. Kibirov could not have sent such reports from Narym to the Okhrana of Yeniseisk, since there were no administrative links between these two localities.³⁷ In short, all these documents were full of pretty obvious mistakes

so that they could be qualified as false³⁸. In mid-July 1937, Stalin summoned Genrikh Lyushkov, whom he had just appointed as head of the NKVD's secret political department to succeed Shtein, and placed him as head of the NKVD in the Far East. He gave him the four forgeries, including the "Eremin letter", and instructed him to forward them to MD Golovachev, Soviet agent in China, and to arrange for them to be published in the Russian Emigrants' Journal. Stalin, indeed, had confidence in Lyushkov; the individual had belonged to the Odessa underworld and was well known to the NKVD for his provocations; he had already been entrusted with important missions; the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial, he had led one of the teams of interrogators who tortured the defendants. At the end of 1936, Stalin had put him in charge of the interrogation of his execrated adversary, Ryutin, and in 1937 he had entrusted him with a purge in Rostov; his NKVD colleagues described him as "an arrogant, arbitrary and

Lyushkov arrived in Khabarovsk at the end of July, accompanied by two officers and five soldiers. From the station he called the NKVD headquarters. He got hold of Balitsky, who had been appointed chief of the NKVD in the Far East in April, and asked him to come and fetch him; Lyushkov had known him for a long time because he had worked with him, Kastnelson and Shtein at the GPU in Kharkov⁴¹. Balitsky arrived by car and, as soon as he dismounted, he was stopped by Lyushkov's men; an express train then took him to Moscow. Lyushkov drove to HQ in Balitsky's car and announced that he was the new leader, "on Stalin's personal orders". He had on him a list of people his boss wanted to have arrested and shot. He had also received the order from Stalin to sup

Far Eastern military district, Marshal V. Bliukher, freshly returned from

Moscow; Bliukher's crime was that he only reluctantly signed the verdict sentencing Tukhachevsky and others to death

generals⁴². —

That same month of July Lyushkov went to Shanghai under a false name and delivered the "Eremin letter" and the other forgeries to Golovachev. The latter, a Russian emigrant,

but an NKVD agent, agreed to publish them in an emigrant newspaper as soon as

Lyushkov allegedly ordered him to do so. — He must

guarantee that he had received them from a former Okhrana officer, Viktor Nikolayevich Russianov, who had served in Yeniseisk before the Revolution. He obviously knew they were fake. Golovachev was a devious and unscrupulous character, who served as a model for the lawyer Komarovski, Lara's seducer in Boris Pasternak's novel, **Doctor Zhivago**. Before the Revolution, he was a lawyer and, during the war

civilian, Cheka informant. Lenin had appointed him Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs in the puppet and ephemeral Republic of the Far East.

Golovachev had no better reputation among Russian emigrants in China. He was believed to be a Soviet agent who, under cover of various companies and "institutes", was spying for the USSR. Fearing that Japanese counterintelligence would eventually take an interest in his activities, he had left Kharbin for Shanghai in 1934, when the Japanese occupied Manchuria. In Shanghai, he presented himself as "Professor Golovachev", to justify the "institutes" he founded.

He nevertheless maintained his contacts with the Russian-language newspapers of occupied Manchuria. The cultural attaché of the French Embassy in Shanghai provided him with a letter of credence to obtain an American visa:

Mr. Golovachev is a highly cultured man who has put his intelligence and knowledge to good use in Shanghai's intellectual circles, while standing above the political fray. Mr. Golovachev enjoys the best reputation in Chinese and foreign circles in Shanghai⁴⁵. »

—
It remained to be elucidated what use the person concerned had made "of his intelligence and his knowledge".

When Lyushkov instructed Golovachev to tell that he had Rusyanov's documents, it was so that the Chinese police, at the instigation of the Soviets, would go and search Rousyanov's house. And to prove that the latter had taken part in the manufacture of the forgeries, Lyushkov had to introduce into his home a package containing paper, stamps and other Okhrana accessories, including a dozen photos of Stalin, Trotsky and Malinovsky.

Stalin had deliberately chosen Rusyanov as his victim: he had probably known during his last exile, before the February Revolution, when Rusyanov was assistant to the head of the Okhrana of Yeniseisk⁴⁷.

After the February Revolution, he was arrested by the Menshevik Boris Nikolaevski, a political exile then elected mayor of Yeniseisk. Nikolaevski had, in fact, found Roussianov burning documents in his office and had him put in detention⁴⁸. A few months later, Siberia having fallen into the hands of Admiral Kolchak, leader of the White Army, Rusyanov had been released, had joined the White Army and had been raised to the rank of colonel. When the White Army had been defeated, Rusyanov had fled to China. In August 1937, Lyushkov therefore "planted" the compromising package in his house in Shanghai.

*

The other part of the provocation was the kidnapping of General Miller in Paris, which was to be carried out before Stalin gave the order to publish the "Eremine letter". To prepare for the kidnapping, the deputy head of the foreign department of the NKVD, Mikhail Shpigelglas, went to Paris in July 1937. He summoned Krivitsky, head of Soviet espionage in Europe, mentioned above. Once again, two agents able to play the German officers were required, but Shpigelglas did not explain that it was for the kidnapping of General Miller.

On September 23, 1937, Miller warned his assistant, General Kousonski, that he was going to a business meeting. Before going, he handed her a letter and said: Don't think I've gone mad, but if I don't come back from this appointment, open this letter and read my message.

Around 1 p.m., Miller was seen by one of his friends near the Soviet residence, Boulevard de Montmorency, in the company of General Skobline.

The latter invited Miller to enter; a massive man appeared behind Miller.

A moment later, the three men had disappeared behind the gates of the villa.

Miller's wife remembered the kidnapping of General Kutieпов; She telephoned Kousonski, who ran to the office and opened Miller's envelope; There he found the following message:

"I have an appointment at 12:30 p.m. with General Skobline at the corner of the street Jasmin and rue Raffet. He has to take me on a date with a

German officer, Colonel Strohmann, military attaché in a Balkan country and someone called Verner, an official of the German Embassy. They are both fluent in Russian.

The interview was arranged by General Skobline. It may be a trap, and that is why I leave you this message⁵¹. »

Kousonski recalled what Miller had told him a few years earlier: "If you go on a dodgy date, always leave a message.

This is what Koutieпов should have done⁵². »

Summoned by Kousonski, Skobline denied everything, even when he was opposed Miller's message. They asked him to go to the police. He left the office first, while Kousonski and his friends exchanged glances. "His behavior is strange, right?" Kousonski muttered. When they had all left, Skoblin had disappeared.

The French police establish important facts: the Soviet ambassador, Vladimir Potemkin, had bought a gray truck on August 13 and, on September 22, the day Miller had disappeared, the truck had parked on a quay in Le Havre, in front of the Soviet freighter Maria Oulianova ; two men had unloaded a large crate of it and carried it on board; a few minutes later, the **Maria Ulyanova** weighed anchor bound for Leningrad. Informed of these facts, President Daladier summoned Potemkin and begged him to recall the freighter to Le Havre, threatening to have it boarded at sea by the Navy. But an hour later he telephoned Potemkin to apologize and state that the **Maria Ulyanova** could not have been involved in General Miller's kidnapping. Indeed, as the threat of war became clearer, Daladier wanted to avoid compromising his relationship with Stalin.

Nevertheless, the investigation continued. French police found fake passports, secret codes and other items at Skobline

proving that Skoblin and his wife, Nadezhda Plevitskaya, were Soviet agents. Plevitskaya was arrested on December 5, 1938 and sentenced to twenty-five years in prison; she died in prison in 1944, during the German occupation.

When the German army occupied Paris in 1940, the Gestapo raided the headquarters of the Organization of Russian Veterans; there she found microphones connected to the Russian émigré Tretyakov, who lived upstairs. Arrested by the Gestapo, the latter confessed that he worked with General Skobline and that, the day Miller had been kidnapped, Skobline, instead of going to the police, had come to hide in this apartment. Tretyakov did not know what had become of Skoblin; he had returned to the USSR, where it is not known what happened to him.

Ten days after Plevitskaya's conviction, the French police arrested Lydia Grozovskaya, an NKVD agent working for the USSR Embassy. It became clear to Stalin that he could not exhibit Miller as an indicted in a show trial: his mere appearance would mean that the latter had been kidnapped on French territory, which would trigger an international scandal and the breakdown of diplomatic relations with the France. He was forced to sheathe the trial he had prepared since he had recovered his file from the Okhrana. On December 15, he shortened the lives of those he was going to indict by having them executed. The names of some of them were published later.

Others were executed in secret, including, probably, Miller and Skoblin.

Stalin had at the same time had to give up using the "Eremin letter" and other forgeries as criminal evidence. But the story of these fakes did not end there; like the genie out of its bottle, they lived their own lives.

NOTES

1. See chapter 10.

2 This reconstruction is supported directly and **indirectly** by numerous facts

from the apartment of one of the officers arrested in Minsk, the copy of a document indicting Stalin had been found.

Youry Kogan learned this from one of his father's friends who had escaped the purge. The first of these meetings took place in 1979 in Jerusalem, in the presence of Michael Meerson-Aksenov, a Russian Orthodox priest, and the other in Beer-Sheba, also in Israel, in 1981, in the presence of Viktor Schwartzburg. **b)**

As the

revealed Alexander Orlov, a number of photocopies of documents Stalin's dossier had been made by the conspirators; the one most likely to be found in the search of the arrested officer's apartment, cited above, was Eremin's report, a one-page document describing in detail Stalin's career at the Okhrana. The fact that Stalin had an almost identical version of this report made indicates that he intended to discredit a copy which had escaped his research, as this chapter demonstrates.

c) The fact that Pauker was secretly executed shortly after the copy of Eremin's report was found in the arrested officer's apartment suggests that it was indeed Pauker who took it to Stalin. Additionally, as head of the NKVD's operational department, Pauker was responsible for all arrests and searches. His responsibility was to report to Stalin anything that needed attention.

3. Krivitsky, **op. cit.**, p. 229-231.

4. **Bukharin Trial**, New York, 1965, p. 582.

5. See Chapter 19.

6. See footnote 3.

7. Yakir and Geller, **op. cit.**, p. 212.

8. NI Koritzski and **Marshal Tukashevski**, Moscow, 1965, p. 128-134.

See also I. Rachkov, "Iz vospominaniy o YB Gamarnike", **Voienno istoricheski journal**, No. 5, 1965, p. 67-70.

9. Boris Viktorov, "Zagovor krasnoi armii", **Pravda**, 29 April 1988.

10. **Ibid.**

11. Rachkov, **op. cit.**, p. 69.

12. Koritzski, **Marshal Tukashevski**, **op. cit.**, p. 189-194.

13. B. Viktorov, "Zagovor krasnoi armii", **op. cit.**

[14.](#) Yakir learned of Stalin's interrogation of Tukhachevsky during his captivity in the camps. The author himself learned about it during his captivity in the Norilsk camp, from the mouth of AY Tsynman, a former NKVD officer.

[15.](#) Unpublished memoirs of Olga Shatunovskaya, Old Bolshevik and member of the party committee who, during Khrushchev's time, investigated Stalin's crimes. His memories were told to me by Vassili Roudich during a recorded interview. See also, Rachkov, **op. cit.**, p. 69-72, and Rapoport and Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 300.

[16.](#) Rachkov, **op. cit.**, p. 69 **sq.**

[17.](#) **Pravda**, June 1, 1937, p. 4.

[18.](#) Rachkov, **op. cit.**, p. 70.

[19.](#) Krivitsky, **op. cit.**, p. 232.

[20.](#) I. Gaglov and I. Selishchev, **Komissary**, Moscow, 1961.

[21.](#) Orlov, **The Secret History**, **op. cit.**, p. 238 **sq.** In this work, published in 1953, Orlov refers to Zhukov as "General N.", but in his Life article of April 23, 1956, "The Sensational Secret Behind Stalin's Damnation", Orlov comments on Zhukov's photo, p. 44, taken in Spain while Orlov was serving there: "I met General Zhukov when he came to Spain as an observer during the civil war. I spoke with him several times and I got the impression that he was neither a courtier nor a puppet of Stalin. The stain cast upon the honor of the Red Army in 1937 must have thwarted its military conscience ever since."

[22.](#) Victorov, **op. cit.**

[23.](#) **Krasnaya zvezda**, June 6, 1937.

[24.](#) Victorov, **op. cit.**

[25.](#) **Ibid.**

[26.](#) **Ibid.**

[27.](#) The quotation, dated June 11, 1937 and signed by Zinovy Kastnelson, is found in the papers of the author's father, YA Brakhtman, a former prisoner of the Dmitrov camp, to whom it was awarded that day.

[28.](#) Gennady Javoronkhov, "I edinojdy ne solgavshy", **Moskovskoie novosti**, April 10, 1988. See also Iosif Kosinski, "Za chto boloris? ", **Novoie rousnskoye slovo**, 22 April 1988.

[29.](#) See Chapter 10, for Colonel Eremin's letter of guarantee, dated June 11, 1912, with Spravka **bez 5/18** attached.

[30.](#) Orlov, **Tainya istoria**, p. 302.

[31.](#) Yulia Pianitskaia, **Dnevnik jeny bolshevik**, New York, 1987, p.

172. See also Javoronkhov, **op. cit.**, and Kosinski, **op. cit.**

[32.](#) The discovery of Stalin's file at the Okhrana in the old office

by Menzhinsky was to resurface in altered form in the "confessions" of the Bukharin trial in March 1938 (see below, chapter 29). Everything indicates that Stalin had learned, some time before July 1937, from the mouth of the arrested officers where the file was, because he had

Kastnelson and Balitski that month.

[33.](#) See Lulechnik, "Zagovor protiv Stalina i delo Tukhachevskogo", **Panorama**, no. 735, 10-16 May 1995, p. 20. According to Lulechnik, EG Plimak had "firmly established Shtein's suicide after interviewing distant relatives of the latter". See also Evgueny Plimak and Vadim Antonov, "Stalin znal chto delal", **Novoie rousskoie slovo**, March 22, 1996, p. 50.

[34.](#) The fabrication of the "Eremin letter" was first denounced by Isaac Don Levine in his article "A Document on Stalin as Czarist Spy", **Life**, April 23, 1956, p. 46 See also Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 9-10.

[35.](#) Eremin's signature in the form "A. Eremin" appears in letters to civilian officials of the Police Department, for example, letter 125493, dated May 13, 1910, to the Chief of the Foreign Agency from the Okhrana, AA Krasilnikov. Eremin begins his letter with the formula "**Milostivy Gosoudar**" ("**Benevolent Sir**") in the same way as in his letter to Beletski, and he does not mention his military rank.

[36.](#) Rare Manuscripts Library, Bakhmetiev Archives, MP Golovachev Collection, Columbia University, New York. See also the reissue of Stalin's "Documents from the Okhrana", in the newspaper **Evreiski mir**, New York, 30 October (no. 23), 6 November (no. 24) and 13 November (no. 25) 1992.

[37.](#) N. Karganov, "Iz proshlogo Stalina", **Vozrozhdenie**, January 13, 1929.
See also chapter 10.

[38.](#) See footnote 36.

[39.](#) Alvin D. Coox, "The Lyushkov Affair", **Soviet Studies**, January 1968, p. 62.

[40.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 244 **sq.**

[41.](#) Recorded interview with RS Osinina, widow of Osinin, Lyushkov's assistant.

[42.](#) Coox, **op. cit.**, p. 408.

[43.](#) Golovachev never admitted that he had received the fabricated documents from Lyushkov; he persisted in asserting that he had received them from Rousyanov. An obvious lie, because Rousyanov would never have made such clumsy fakes, knowing the first name and surname of Captain Zheleznyakov, under whose orders he had worked for a long time in Yeniseisk. And Stalin would never have instructed Lyushkov to "plant" these fakes if he hadn't had complete confidence in him. Liushkov, on the other hand, had confidence in Golovachev, capable of having these forgeries published in China.

[44.](#) Interview recorded in Nayak, New York, in 1975, with General T. G. Gerbov, a Russian emigrant living in Kharbin, who had known Golovachev personally. Author's archive.

[45.](#) This letter, signed by Grosbois and dated June 8, 1948, can be found in the ID Levine archives. Copy in the author's archives.

[46.](#) Rousyanov's son, who had emigrated to Australia, sent this package of material from the Okhrana to ID Levine, and the author had occasion to examine this material at Levine, Virginia.

[47.](#) NM Ulanovskaya reported in a recorded interview that her husband, A. Ulanovski, of the Soviet secret service, had met Stalin during their joint exile in Yeniseisk and that Stalin was known to frequently visit the Okhrana office in that city. .

[48.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 613.

[49.](#) Krivitsky, **op. cit.**, p. 216-218.

[50.](#) Lev Rudminsky, who was imprisoned in the Norilsk gulag, had participated in the kidnappings of Generals Kutieпов and Miller. He remembered that the purpose of these abductions was the desire to fabricate documents compromising Soviet leaders.

[51.](#) S. Rojdestvenski, "Pokhishchenie generala Millera", **Novoie
rousskoie slovo**, 19 may 1979.

[52.](#) Ibid.

[53.](#) Bukharin trial, op. cit.

29

The "bagatelle" theater

In view of the scandal caused by the kidnapping of General Miller, Stalin greatly reduced the scale of his subsequent show trial. He decided that there would be no mention of the general or the documents of the Okhrana. The trial was scheduled for early March 1938. But several important events took place before that.

In July 1937, the resident of the NKVD in Switzerland, Ignaz Reiss, had written to the Central Committee to declare its opposition to "Stalin's counter-revolution" and to demand "a return to Lenin, his teachings and his cause".

Stalin understood that Reiss had learned of the discovery of his dossier at the Okhrana and had informed Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son; he gave the order to assassinate Reiss, Lev Sedov and two secretaries of Trotsky, Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement, who had also been informed by Reiss of the existence of this file². On the morning of September 4, 1938, Swiss police discovered Reiss' corpse, riddled with bullet holes. The murder was carried out by a mobile band of assassins commanded by Mikhail Shpigelglas, deputy to the head of the NKVD's foreign department, Mark Zborovski, whose code name was "Stephen". The latter, in fact, had won the confidence of Lev Sedov and had obtained from him the address of Reiss, his wife and their daughter.

Shpigelglas then ordered Agent Gertrude Schildbach, a close friend of the Reiss's, to get Reiss into her car, where killers would be waiting for her.

The Swiss police found the car, with the bullet holes and blood; this vehicle had been hired by another NKVD correspondent, Renate Steiner. Arrested, she revealed the names of the assassins and the hotel where they were staying. The police arrived at the hotel too late, but found the murderers' luggage with, inside, a box of poisoned chocolates, a gift from Stalin to Reiss's wife and daughter, whom Schildbach had apparently forgotten from their to put back.

The investigation into Reiss's assassination threatened to unmask a vast network of Soviet agents in Europe and lead the police to its nerve center, the USSR Embassy in Paris; like the Okhrana, indeed, the

NKVD had chosen the French capital to set up its operations center there.

Shortly after the murder of Reiss, Krivitski, already quoted, chief of espionage Soviet military in Europe, deserted for fear that the same fate would be in store for him. He had good reasons for this: he had refused to execute his friend Reiss. This put him on the Moscow list of people to be eliminated. On October 6, 1937, he asked for the protection of the French government against the henchmen of the NKVD. Shpigelglas, charged with the assassination, drew a blank, as the French police had assigned a heavy escort to Krivitski. Nevertheless, he was found dead, shot to death, in a hotel room in Washington, in 19413.

—
In October 1937, Shpigelglas traveled to Spain to carry out a series of murders ordered by Stalin.

— There he met Alexander Orlov, adviser to the Republican government, mentioned above, and during a long drive, told him of his apprehensions about the series of arrests and executions in the USSR, cases where senior Soviet officials had "disappeared with personal car and driver", as well as inexplicable suicides of NKVD and government officials. Orlov had heard from his cousin Kastnelson of the discovery of Stalin's file, but he said nothing about it. Shpigelglas asked him to have him appointed to him and Orlov understood that he feared for his life and hoped to find refuge in Spain until the alert was over; he also surmised that Shpigelglas wanted to bring his wife and daughter over and seek political asylum, like Krivitski.

—
But the alarm continued: in October 1937, most of the Soviet agents in Europe had been recalled to Moscow and executed; they had returned only to try to save their own and because, according to a decree of June 8, 1934, all members of the families of soldiers who fled abroad or refused to return to the USSR would be exiled for ten years in Siberia, even if they had no knowledge of the "treason of the fatherland"; a secret article stated that all relatives of NKVD "traitors" would be executed if the "traitor" revealed secrets

of state. Few officers were willing to face such consequences.

However, two of Krivitski's agents, "Paul" and "Bruno", those who had played the German officers in Prague in the affair of the false "dossier

Tukhachevsky" and, in Paris, in the kidnapping of General Miller, had also chosen freedom. of Miller, and his wife, Nadezhda Plevitskaya. During her trial in Paris, Plevitskaya reported that Eitingon had for years given her expensive clothes and jewelry.⁸ After Miller's abduction, she said, Eitingon was came to say goodbye to him, because he was leaving for Jerusalem to open a psychiatric clinic there; he died there in 1944, probably assassinated. —

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Among the agents who returned to Moscow was Sergei Efron, literary critic and husband of the famous poetess Marina Tsvetaeva, who knew nothing of her husband's activities in the NKVD. Some time after her return to the USSR, she heard nothing more of him. His daughter went to Moscow to inquire about her father's fate; she was arrested. Tsvetaïeva imitated her in 1939 to find out what had happened to her husband and her daughter: she was exiled to a Siberian village, Elaboug; she hanged herself there on August 31, 1941. Efron was shot in October. Their daughter did not emerge from the gulag until after Stalin's death, sixteen years later, physically and mentally crippled. —

Zborovski and Shpigelglas had good reason to worry. After Reiss's murder, three other people informed by him of the existence of the Stalin dossier were murdered. On February 16, 1937, Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son, hospitalized for an appendectomy, was shot dead in his hospital bed, on the orders of Zborovski, Shpigelglas' deputy. Zborovski then gave the killers the coordinates of Erwin Wolf, one of Trotsky's secretaries, in Spain; they shot him there. The decapitated corpse of Rudolf Klement, another Trotsky secretary, was found in the Seine. When the Germans occupied France, Zborovski fled to the United States; he was arrested as a Soviet agent; he traded his skills for a short prison sentence; expanded, he worked in various hospitals and universities and helped the FBI unmask Soviet spies.

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On the very day that Trotsky's son was assassinated in Paris, the leader of the foreign department of the NKVD in Moscow, Abram Slutsky, who had actively collaborated in the assembly of the "Tukhachevsky dossier", died of poisoning. Frinovski, Yezhov's deputy, invited him to his office in the

Lubyanka, to "discuss business"; he offered her tea and little cakes. Sloutski tasted it and succumbed instantly. Half an hour later Frinovski summoned Shpigelglas to his office; the latter discovered the inert body of Sloutski in an armchair. Frinovski told him that the doctor had just left and that "medicines were ineffective in such a case". Sloutski, he said, had died of a heart attack.

The body was displayed in the NKVD club, surrounded by a guard of honor, and the officers came to bow before it. Several of them had the basics of forensic medicine: they noticed purple spots on the visible parts of the corpse, a clear sign of poisoning with hydrocyanic acid.

Sloutski was talkative; he had boasted too much of his friendship with Stalin and he had been wrong to mention his "strange behavior", including his persistence in attributing an improbable trip to Oslo to Pyatakov. At the time of his death he was actively preparing for a show trial for March 1938 and he had been assigned to question Yagoda, the former NKVD leader and one of the main defendants; there, too, he had been too loudly surprised at Stalin's whim of insisting that Yagoda had been an agent of the Okhrana. These words were reported to Stalin.

For diplomats stationed in Moscow, these arrests and executions massive could only be the work of a sick person in the grip of a persecution mania. Such was not the case, wrote Alexander Orlov. When we learned all the facts connected with the Tukhachevsky affair, we would understand that Stalin knew what he was doing. »

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The great culprit of the coming trial had been decided by Stalin: this would be Nikolai Bukharin, and this "Bukharin trial" became infamous. His name had been put in the mouths of several defendants in the Kamenev-Zinoviev trial. During popular meetings, speakers demanded that he be put "in the hole". He was asked to go to Kaganovich's office, for a confrontation with his friend Grigory Sokolnikov, who was under arrest. Sokolnikov declared that he and Bukharin belonged to "an anti-Soviet organization". Like so many others, Sokolnikov had made a deal with Stalin: he would compromise Bukharin in exchange for his life and his family's immunity.

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Bukharin was summoned to the party plenum and Yezhov accused him of treason, terrorist activities and participation in the murder of Kirov. Stalin calmly declared that there was no need to rush Bukharin's arrest. In fact, he spent the next three months in Stalin's former apartment in the Kremlin; he had set up his office in the very room where Nadezhda Alliloueva had committed suicide. He blamed himself for having endangered his second wife, Anna, who was twenty-five years younger than him and who had been the mother of their first child for several months. She had caught him with a gun in his hand, but he had assured her that he had no intention of committing suicide. He wrote Stalin several letters beginning with "Dear Koba", but got no response. At the beginning of February 1937, he wrote to the Central Committee: "In protest against unheard-of accusations, I declare myself on a hunger strike. The next day, three NKVD officers came to evict him from his apartment. The phone rang. "How are you, Nikolai? Stalin asked on the other end of the line. "They came to drive me out of the Kremlin," protested Bukharin. "Send them to the devils," Stalin said, and he gave the order to cancel the expulsion. Bukharin's first wife wrote to Stalin declaring that she would not stay in the party if such false accusations were made against a true revolutionary like Bukharin. She was arrested and executed.

Summoned once again before the party plenum on February 27 1937, Bukharin was arrested this time. Until May 19, when mass arrests and executions had begun, Bukharin's interrogation proceeded as usual: he was pressed to "confess" to his participation in the murder of Kirov and anti-Soviet activities.

When Stalin's attention was monopolized by the discovery of his file at the Okhrana, Bukharin's case was "cooled off" for seven months. Then, on December 16, Stalin changed his mood and several defendants were summarily executed. Bukharin then became the "bad guy" in Stalin's new scenario.

The "Bukharin trial" opened on March 2, 1938, in the October room of the House of Trade Unions. As usual, the defendants confessed to crimes they had never committed. Enukidje, Stalin's old friend, already executed on December 15, was posthumously accused of being the mastermind of an anti-Soviet conspiracy. The day after

At the opening of the trial, American journalist ID Levine wrote these lines in the **Journal American**, under the headline Stalin Suspected of Fabricating Trials to Hide His Past:

Is Stalin, a former spy for the Tsarist Okhrana, trying to wash away the traces of his career in the Romanov secret service in blood? As the author of the first biography of Stalin, the writer of these lines has long been aware of reports that some Old Bolsheviks have in their possession a secret file from the Okhrana archives, proving that Stalin was a super-spy for the Tsar when he rallied Lenin.

This accusation is so incredible, despite the suspicious facts and passages in Stalin's career, that no one has dared to make it public without formal proof¹⁶...

The article was described as "sensationalist". As early as 1926, however, He had Levine had been informed of the discovery of the Stalin file ¹⁷ . even received the freshest data from Erwin Wolf and Rudolf Klement, Trotsky's secretaries, who got them from Reiss; when Wolf, Klement, Sedov and Reiss were murdered, he was certain that the reports of the discovery of the dossier were true and that Stalin silenced everyone who had knowledge of the dossier. Levine did not know then that it was Zborovski, the person responsible for the assassinations of the four men, who had put Stalin on the trail of informants by infiltrating the Trotskyist group in Paris.

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Inevitably, Stalin evoked presumed links of certain accused with the Okhrana. Except for Bukharin; he was accused of having wanted to kill Lenin in 1917 because he suspected him of being a German spy. Stalin now wants to put Lenin's corpse in the

dock! Bukharin retorted to his interrogator. In fact, Stalin had associated the accusation of collaboration with the Okhrana and the rumor that Lenin had been a German agent; he had already done so in an article from 1917, where he attacked the provisional government:

"First they tried to discredit proven revolutionary fighters as German spies, and when they failed, they try to make them into Tsarist spies." »

Bukharin categorically refused to sign any "confession" about his intentions to assassinate Lenin, although Stalin had promised him his life in exchange. Stalin then brought Karl Radek from his camp at the Lubyanka, to prove that he kept his word when he promised to spare the life of an accused person; but Radek could draw no concessions from Bukharin, except that he had considered arresting Lenin for a single day.

Then the mysterious "Rykov dossier" appeared in the trial. Bulanov, Yagoda's assistant, said: "I come directly to the specific crime in which I participated. I know from what Yagoda told me that the decision to assassinate Nikolai Ivanovich Yezhov..." Vishinski interrupted him, "Did you know where the secret Rykov file was?" Bulanov answered immediately: "Yagoda had it. — The conspiracy file?" insisted Vishinsky. "hide," replied Bulanov.

And without being interrupted again, he resumed his extravagant story of conspiracy, poisonings and murders, of which Enukidjé would have been the mastermind at the instigation of Trotsky. But his co-defendant Rykov did not let the issue of the case go unchallenged:

"Bulanov spoke about my archives, which were found in the hands of Yagoda. I would like him to say what was found, where these archives came from, what the contents were and how he is informed of them. »

Vishinsky gave the floor to Bulanov, who gave a strange answer: "If I knew exactly what these archives contain and how extensive it is, I would certainly answer my co-defendant. Unfortunately, I don't know. I spoke about these archives on the following basis: when Yagoda had changed quarters, due to the renovation of the building, I do not remember on what occasion, but I found a folder of documents among others which had been staying in the safe for a long time. I asked Yagoda about them and he replied, "Don't open them, they are Rykov's archives." It seemed to me that this was enough for me to be able to evoke these archives. »

Ulrikh cut off the deposition and announced a recess of thirty minutes. On resumption, Yagoda described the poisoning of

Menzhinsky, Kuibyshev, Gorki, his son Peshkov and Kirov, which he had perpetrated on the orders of ENUKIDJE. He did not mention Rykov's file, but at the first opportunity Rykov said: "I have a question for Yagoda about the archives that Bulanov was talking about. "I didn't have Rykov's archives," replied Yagoda. It was Vishinsky who took over: "I ask Bulanov: what archives, you say, were in Yagoda's possession?"

Bulanov's interrogators had not prepared him for this insistence; not knowing what to say, he answered, confused and annoyed: "I have already said it in my testimony to the Court. I repeat..." And he repeated the same story.

This time, Yagoda seemed interested in Rykov's case; he turned to Bulanov: "Allow me a question: perhaps you remember at least one document from this file and will you tell me what it was?" »

Bulanov replied curtly: "If I remembered, I would have said it already." »

Yagoda persisted and, as if thinking aloud, said: "It's rather strange, he says it was Rykov's archives, but on the basis of what documents?" Bulanov, annoyed, retorted:

"To answer that, I can only say this: it was that there was a time when Yagoda did not doubt for a single second my presence of mind and my ability to apprehend things very quickly in no time. no matter what circumstances. I don't know why he is now denying what seems indisputably clear to me: I said what I knew and I felt it necessary to say it. »

Yet it was Yagoda who had the last word on the "secret archives" of Rykov":

"In any case, if these archives had really existed, they were not only a trifle in comparison with the other crimes²². »

He was unaware that this "Trifle" was the culmination of the spectacle organized by Stalin: in his script, which he had considerably modified, Rykovov was to be accused of having been an Okhrana, while Bulanov was to declare that Rykov's file at the Okhrana had been found in Menzhinsky's office during "a change of offices".

Several so-called "Okhrana agents" testified that they had been so before the Revolution. Some characteristic details of Stalin's career emerged in their statements. The first officer

unmasked from the Okhrana" who appeared on March 3, 1938, was VI Ivanov, Commissar for the Timber Industry.

"My first mistake, he declared, dates back to 1911, when I was a student eighth grade at the Tula gymnasium. That's where the Okhrana recruited me. I had been expelled from university, many students were expelled from university. »

He did not know that what he was reciting was the expulsion of the seminarians from Tiflis which Stalin had provoked four decades earlier. Ivanov continued: "In Moscow, the Okhrana got their hands on me again. — »

Vishinski was satisfied with Ivanov's testimony and asked him few questions. At the session of

March 5, 1938, IA Zelenski, another "unmasked agent", who had hitherto been a director of cooperatives, began his testimony by saying: "I must first indicate my most serious crime: to have worked for the tsarist okhrana." Then, in the course of a verbose deposition, he related that he had secretly seen a gendarmerie officer of whom he knew only the first two names, personal name and father's name, "Vassily Konstantinovitch ", and that, having been arrested and having complained about it in a letter, he had been summoned by this "Vassily Konstantinovich" who had told him: "It was better for you that we arrest you. He was certainly unaware that what he was recounting was Stalin's real relationship with the lieutenant-colonel of the gendarmerie IP

Vasiliev. "I stayed in prison for six months, after which I was exiled to Naryn, continued Zelenski. When I was in prison, it was the same gendarmerie officer who visited me. reports from my place of exile." Zelenski sent his reports to the Averboukh printing press and he added that his interrogator had questioned the latter to verify his statements and that Averboukh had confirmed them. L.

Averboukh, husband of Yagoda's sister, could confirm nothing more, having been, like many others, executed on the previous December 15.

Other elements of the lesson learned by Zelenski obviously referred to episodes of Stalin's activity in the Okhrana in 1912, when he had begun to cooperate with Lieutenant-Colonel Vasiliev. Thus, Zelenski mentioned an agent provocateur named Polonko, who served as a liaison with the Okhrana. Now, this "Polonko"

(the equivalent of "Polack" in Russian) was none other than the Pole Roman Malinowski, who had been Stalin's rival in the Okhrana. Finally, Zelenski says that he had interrupted his collaboration with the Okhrana in 1912; it was an echo of Eremin's letter to Beletsky, stating that Stalin had stopped working for the Okhrana after the Prague conference in 1912.

Stalin's pseudonyms, "Vassili" and "Vassiliev", also appeared in the testimony of another "unmasked agent of the Okhrana", PT Zubarev, an official at the Commissariat of Agriculture. "Tell us under what circumstances you became an agent of the Okhrana," Vishinski asked him. And Zubarev recounts that he had been recruited by a police officer named "Vassilyev", who had told him: "If you want to escape punishment, the only way is to accept my offer to become a police officer. .

Zubarev therefore agreed and provided Vasiliev with information about the underground revolutionaries and some of their most active leaders. Zubarev added that when he moved to another city, he resumed his activity as an agent under the pseudonym "Paren". Vishinsky asked him if he had had another, and Zubarev replied that in Ufa he had had that of "Prokhor". "When?" asked Vishinski: "In 1916/24.

— Whereupon Judge Ulrikh said to Zubarev: "Tell us about your espionage activities." "The defendant launched into accounts of his alleged spying 'for Fascist Germany.' So call the latter. A middle-aged man was ushered into the room, who said he was called his appearance, eliciting murmurs and laughter from the audience and even a good-natured smile on Vishinski's ordinarily surly mask. , it was Ulrikh who asked the questions: "To be precise, did you recruit Zubarev?" he asked. "Zoubarev... Yes," replied the other. "Tell us a bit about him, how you recruited him," Ulrikh continued.

Vasiliev explained that he had recruited Zubarev some thirty years earlier and had obtained a written commitment from him. Ulrikh wanted to know the nature of the engagement. That of providing information to the police, replied Vasiliev. In making this pledge, he said his

pseudonym would be Vassili. "He said that?" asked Ulrich. "Yes, I remember it very well," replied Vasiliev. "How can you remember it so well?" So many things have happened since, and yet you have such a clear memory of this Zubarev? Vasiliev replied, "I haven't seen him since 1909."

Vishinski then turned to Ulrikh and asked permission to question Zubarev. Whereupon he asked the latter: "Do you remember? Is this really the Vasiliev who was the inspector at that time? » Zubarev did not know what to answer. 'Thirty years have passed since then, and it's hard to remember,' he replied after hesitation, 'but yes, I do believe it's that man, I don't deny it. Vishinski insisted, "Does he look like him?" - Yes, but he was younger, "says Zubarev.

Vishinski encouraged him to talk and asked him if he had chosen the pseudonym "Vassili" himself, but Zubarev did not remember and replied that in any case, he had taken this pseudonym.

The highlight of the interrogation was that the pseudonym "Vassili" had particularly aroused Vishinski's curiosity. And for good reason: it was in order to attribute to another the pseudonym that Stalin had used when he was in the service of the Okhrana, and which was found in certain documents, that this "recruiter" named Vasiliev.

*

The Bukharin trial ended on March 12, 1938 Stalin had authorized Bukharin to modify his deposition and to deny that he had intended to assassinate Lenin and that he had participated in the murders of Kirov, Menzhinsky, Kuibyshev and Gorky. In exchange for this concession, he demanded that Bukharin read the final declaration which he himself had written. Bukharin there criticized in passing "certain Western and American intellectuals", who do not understand that "in our country, the adversary, the enemy, sometimes has a double personality"; it was attributing to others Stalin's own character trait, the one he himself had described so well in **Provokator Anna Serebriakova**. Bukharin asserted that Dostoyevsky's psychology was no longer valid in the USSR. In the Soviet Union, he said, Dostoyevsky's characters were a thing of the past; can they survive

to be "in the suburbs of small provincial towns, assuming they existed. But on the contrary, this psychology is found in Western Europe²⁶

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". At 4 p.m. on March 13, Ulrikh read the death sentences of the eighteen indicted, including Bukharin, Yagoda, Rykov and "all unmasked Okhrana agents". Three defendants were sentenced to prison terms and none survived. The death sentences were immediately enforceable. In a book he published in 1942, Walter Duranty, for several years Moscow correspondent for the **New York Times**, described Ulrikh as a "stern but fair" judge. A few months earlier, the same Duranty had written that Gamarnik's suicide "proved that he had been involved in a plot with the Germans²⁸". And in a report to Washington on March 7, 1938, the United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Joseph Davies, noted that the trials had produced "irrefutable evidence, substantiating the charge of treason." When, during his lectures, Davies was asked if there was a fifth column in the USSR, he would elicit laughter by replying, "No, we executed them all."

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NOTES

1. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 223.
2. ID Levine had received information from Wolf and Klement about the case; the assassinations convinced him of their veracity.
3. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 224.
4. Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 90 **sq.** See also Schwartz, **op. cit.**
5. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 188.
6. **Ibid.**, p. 188 **sq.**
7. **Ibid.**, p. 223-225.
- 8 Rozhdestvensky, **op. cit.**
- 9 Schwartz, **op. cit.** The first reports of the links between Eitington, Skoblin and Plevitskaya were revealed in a journal of Russian emigration, **Vozhrozhdenie**, Paris, 9 December 1938 and in an anonymous manuscript in Russian, dated 1937, cited in Dziak, **op. cit.**
10. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 444. See also Pavel Antokolski, **Novy Mir**, n° 4, 1966, as well as Marina Tstevayeva, **Izbrannyye**

sochineniya, introduction, Moscow-Leningrad, 1964. Efron is listed among the prisoners executed in October 1941.

[11.](#) Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 99 **sq.** See also Schwartz, **op. cit.**

[12.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 228-232.

[13.](#) Felix Medvedev, **Ogoniok**, no. 26-30, Moscow, 1987. See also **Soviet Media Digest**, Radio Liberty, August 8, 1987, Nos. 725-05 and 725-13.

[14.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 271. The author knew Youry Sokolnikov at Norilsk Special Regime Camp No. 4 in 1952, and they became friends during the Norilsk uprising in the summer of 1953. After his release from Norilsk, Sokolnikov was unable to obtain permission to live in Moscow, but was allowed to live 100 kilometers from the city, according to regulations.

[15.](#) See footnote 13.

[16.](#) ID Levine, **Journal American**, March 3, 1938; the subtitle of the article was: Levine reviewed reports proving the Red Chief was a Tsarist spy. »

[17.](#) See chapter 17, about Levine's letter to the author, on this report. This one arrived in 1926 in the magazine **Sotzialisticheski vestnik**, published in Berlin. David Shub, the magazine's editor-in-chief, informed Levine.

[18.](#) ID Levine, in an interview with the author at Chappaqua, New York, 1976.

[19.](#) Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 271 **sq.**

[20.](#) Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 221 **sq.**

[21.](#) See footnote 19.

[22.](#) **Bukharin Trial**, New York, 1965, p. 478-499.

[23.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 110 **sq.**

[24.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 272-275.

[25.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 145-149.

[26.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 666. Stalin's deep distrust of Dostoyevsky – which he had banned – is explained by the psychological intuition that this novelist had of certain types of personality.

[27.](#) Walter Duranty, **The Kremlin and the People**, New York, 1941, p. 37.

[28.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 55.

[29.](#) Joseph Davies, **Mission of Moscow**, vol. I, New York, 1941, p. 39.

[30.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 673.

thirty

The mysterious "worker Vasily"

In 1937 and 1938 alone, Yezhov submitted for approval to Stalin three hundred and eighty-three lists of party members selected for liquidation. These lists were usually countersigned: "Approved, J. Stalin, V. Molotov" – Signature which sometimes sanctioned the execution of three thousand people in a single day. Terrified, the Old Bolsheviks, most of whom languished in camps, remained silent when Stalin undertook to rewrite his biography in 1937. He thus published a **Brief History of the Party** far removed from reality. As usual, he was not replacing facts with complete fabrications, but with distorted and truncated versions of the truth.

Until 1939, all of Stalin's biographies mentioned his five arrests and two escapes from his places of exile. But in the new biography published in 1939, he increased the number of arrests to seven and that of escapes to six. In reality, when he had been arrested by the leader of the Okhrana of Tiflis, Colonel Zasytkin, he had provided him with information about the Avlabar press which had led to its liquidation. In the new biography, he told that he organized the Avlabar press in 1903 and led it from his prison!

He added a new flourish to his escape from Novaya Ouda in 1903: he said that he had forged an Okhrana agent's identity card in his own name and that with this false document he had been able to go to Batum by deceiving the vigilance of a gendarmier officer. –

The writer Mikhail Bulgakov was appointed to construct a play which would be entitled **Batum**, on "the leading role of comrade Stalin in the Batum demonstration". In 1934, Stalin had all his early biographies crushed, but in 1939 he authorized the publication of a new version, **Detstvo i yunost' vojdia: dokumenty, zapiski, rasskazy** ("Childhood and youth of the Chief : documents, notes and memories"). Stalin deleted memories of people he didn't want mentioned and passages he didn't like. V. Kaminski and I.

Vereshchagin, identified as the compilers of this biography, do not claim authorship. The work bore the mark of the antagonistic impulses that tore Stalin apart: on the one hand the desire to tell the truth and on the other the need to distort it. We find here, as usual, scraps of truth, as in the episode of the massive expulsion of the seminarians from Tiflis, provoked by the young Koba and which is described sarcastically: "In the autumn 1899, forty to fifty people (students of the ecclesiastical seminary) were forced to leave the seminary "of their own free will"6.

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Stalin had not destroyed all the documents in his file at the Okhrana in Saint-Petersburg; thus, he filed his original report to the Okhrana, dated June 5-18, 1912, in the Soviet archives, presenting it as his "circular letter No. 1 to the party", and he mentioned it in his complete works⁷1941, for the first time, he divulged his pseudonym "Vassili" which had been mentioned in two circular reports from his file at the Okhrana, also filed in the Soviet archives8.

One of these two reports, dated March 7, 1913, reports that Stalin had adopted the two pseudonyms of "Vassili" and "Koba" in the party, and the other, of April 19, also refers to them.

Rewriting his life story, Stalin took great pains to book himself a role in a film script about the October Revolution. In the summer of 1938, he invited a well-known screenwriter, Alexei Kapler, to his dacha in Kuntsevo, and commissioned him to write a script for a film about Lenin. Mikhail Romm, a well-known director, was chosen to direct it. Stalin frequently discussed the script with Kapler and Romm and offered his suggestions. "At this moment, Stalin enters the room," he suggested, for example. Kapler asked what Stalin was saying then. "Something wise, wise," replied Stalin. Following Kapler's frequent visits, Svetlana, who was then thirteen, fell in love with her; he was, in fact, a handsome boy of thirty-four. Stalin didn't notice it at first, then when he found out, he accused Kapler of being a British spy and had him thrown in prison.

Kapler's screenplay was too long for a single film: Stalin had it split in two, **Lenin in October** and **Lenin in 1918**. The main character was neither Lenin nor Stalin, but a mysterious "worker Vassili", heroic and without patronymic or surname. The role in football held

by a fashionable actor, Nikolai Okhlopkov. Lenin appeared in the film as helpless and helpless without the wise counsel of "worker Vasily", and even Stalin's role was small in comparison. Critics saw it as a symbol of the wisdom of the proletariat.

The twists and turns of the script owed something to historical truth. The "worker Vasily" took Lenin there in July 1917, to a makeshift hut in the suburbs of Petrograd, from where Lenin went to Finland. However, in 1917, it was Stalin who had led Lenin and Zinoviev to a hut in the forest near Razhiv, to protect them from the "provisional government dogs". When the film was released in theaters in 1939, no one could dispute his version of events.

Lenin was dead, Zinoviev had been shot in 1936 Kroupskaïa, who had known Emelyanov and his hut, died before the release of the film; it was rumored that she had been poisoned. Obviously, the "worker Vasily" was an idealized double of Stalin and it was he and not Lenin who was the real movie heroes.

Mixing myth and reality, Stalin had substituted for "Vassili", the Okhrana agent that he had been, the disproportionately magnified image of the homonymous worker. It was thus, too, that one of the twelve Bolshevik agents of the Okhrana listed in the **Bolsheviki book**, the very one who was referred to only by the pseudonym of "Vassili" and whose identity had never been established, was "unmasked" by Stalin's justice during the Bukharin trial, when the accused Zubarev had been forced "to confess" that his pseudonym at the Okhrana had been "Vassili" and that he had been recruited by an officer named Vasiliev. Stalin had forced Zubarev to "confess" to

events of his own life.

NOTES

1. ZT Serdyuk, speech at the XXII Party Congress, **Pravda**, October 31, 1961.
2. D. Volkogonov, television interview, broadcast in the United States by NBC, March 27, 1991.
3. See chapter 5.

4. **Batumskaya demonstration 1902-gogoda**, Moscow, 1937, p. 140.

5. Mikhayl Bulgakov, **Sobranie sochinennyi**, Moscow, 1990, p. 698.

6. V. Kaminski and I. Vereshchagin, **Dostvo i younost vojdia**, Moscow, 1939, p. 88.

7. Stalin, **Sochinenniya, op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 417. See also Z.

Serebriakova, "Stalin i tsarskaia okhrana", **Sovershenno secretno**, n° 7, 1990

Stalin's complaint against Malinovsky is missing from this copy.

Serebriakova wrote that the original of Stalin's report has miraculously survived and has, moreover, been found in two archive centers"; she refers to the handwritten copy from the Central Archive and the typewritten copy from the Ordzhonikidze file. "This alone is enough to prove Stalin's connection with the Okhrana," Serebriakova writes. This document survived because Stalin copied it and recast it as "Circular Letter No. 1 on the composition of the Central Committee." What Stalin did not know was that Eremin had had copies made of Stalin's report, recommending that the typist omit Stalin's complaint against Malinovsky, and that he had sent these copies to the foreign agency of the Okhrana. in Paris and to the interrogator of Ordzhonikidze, under the address **Spravka bez no**, that is to say "without reference number." The copy in Ordzhonikidze's file was discovered by Serebriakova.

8. **Krasny arkhiv**, No. 2 (105), Ogv, Main Archives Administration of the NKVD of the USSR, 1941, p. 30 **sq.**

9. Interview recorded between Efim Sevela and the author in Chappaqua, New York, 1976 (author's archive).

10. Jennifer Dunning, "Alexei Kapler", **The New York Times**, 15 September 1979, p. 12.

11. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 200 **sq.**

12. Rumors collected by the author from various people.

13. Hyde, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 376 **sq.**

31

"like breathing poisonous gas"

In May 1938, Stalin sent his assistant Lev Mekhlis and Frinovski, Yezhov's assistant, to the Far East to "liquidate the Balitsky nest" in the NKVD and "the Gamarnik-Boulin gang" in the Red Army.

The year before, Stalin had ordered Boulin to shoot Gamarnik. In June of the same year, Khrushchev gave a speech in which he called Balitsky a "fascist". Trucks loaded with arrested NKVD and Red Army officers were unloading their human cargoes into Khabarovsk prisons. Frinovski killed sixteen senior officials of the NKVD2 with his own hands.

The head of the NKVD in the Far East, General Lyushkov, did not appear not among the victims. Stalin, in fact, needed him to publish the false "letter Eremin" in the Russian press of the emigrants from China; but he differed the order; he no longer knew what to do with these forgeries. On the one hand, they should have served as "criminal evidence" against General Miller, but he had already been executed; and on the other, they were to discredit authentic Okhrana documents that might still be in circulation. Above all, they reinforced Stalin's fantasy that his complicity with the Okhrana was an invention of his enemies.

Lyushkov was alarmed at the purge that was decimating his collaborators. A hardened ex-convict, he had few illusions about his chances of survival. He was well aware that his arrest was only delayed because Stalin was waiting to publish the "Eremin letter" and other forged Okhrana documents. Knowing his man well, he guessed that these forgeries would be used to discredit genuine documents and he probably assumed that the purges, intended to hide Stalin's past in the Okhrana, would eventually swallow him up too.

On June 9, 1938, he announced to his assistant Grigory Osinin-Vinnitsky that he had to go to the Soviet-Manchurian border to meet "a very important agent". He left Khabarovsk after taking from secret funds four thousand Manchurian **gobis** , intended to "encourage" this

agent. Before arriving at the border post, Lyushkov dressed in civilian clothes; he was escorted by an officer of his services, who stood a little behind, awaiting his return. But Lyushkov did not return; it had melted into night and a thick fog that soon changed to rain.

In the early hours of June 12, 1938, a Japanese border patrol in Manchukuo spotted a strange figure in the morning mists. Lyushkov was arrested and a Japanese intelligence officer, who spoke Russian, interrogated him and urgently reported to Japanese Army HQ in Seoul, Korea, that he was dealing with "the escapee of the century".

Lyushkov was sent to Seoul, where the Japanese, in disbelief, initially took him for a Soviet double agent. They had him transferred to Tokyo. His defection was disclosed on July 1. Soviet diplomats had received instructions to protest that the real Lyushkov was still in the USSR and that the individual present in Tokyo was an impostor.

In the West, the defection seemed incredible. On June 4, 1938, an editorial of the **New York Times**, titled "Journal of a Japanese Schoolboy", claimed that the affair was an anti-Soviet invention. The Germans were smarter.

Admiral Wilhelm Canaris, head of counterintelligence, dispatched an agent to interrogate Lyushkov. Major Schol, the German deputy military attache in Tokyo, obtained an account of Lyushkov's interrogation and passed it on to his friend Richard Sorge, the most important Soviet agent in Tokyo, acting under cover of correspondence from a German newspaper. Sorge alerted Moscow and was asked to "transmit immediately" all information about Liushkov5.

The latter was very selective in his declarations to the Japanese interrogators. He did give them some limited information about the positions of the Russian troops, but did not unmask the Soviet agents in China or Japan.

— He said nothing about his own role in the mass purges, the preparations for show trials or the interrogations of Kamenev, Zinoviev, Ryutin and other party figures. He was also silent on the deportations of Koreans from the Soviet Far East (Korea was then under Japanese rule), which he himself had led in December 1937 and for which he had been decorated.

Finally, he also did not speak of the fake Okhrana documents that he had been instructed to disseminate in China; not possessing them, he therefore could not

not prove this gigantic falsification. In fact, he had nothing to gain by involving himself in Stalin's provocations, mass purges and show trials; he did not wish to discredit either Stalin or the regime which had raised him to such high office as the leadership of the NKVD in the Far East. The Japanese had therefore not learned much from him.

Nevertheless, the USSR embassy in Tokyo was ordered to liquidate Lyushkov⁸.

His defection had meanwhile accelerated arrests and executions in the Far East. Marshal Vassili Blioukher, leader of the Soviet forces in the region, was arrested, imprisoned at the Lubyanka, tortured and executed. Twenty-two NKVD officers were executed, including Lyushkov's own deputy, Osinin-Vinnitsky, accused of being "a Japanese spy". MM Zapadny, Lyushkov's successor, was also arrested and executed. On July 29, it was announced that the Far East Purge had been ordered by Stalin himself, to prevent the penetration of Soviet defenses by the Japanese. Special troops replaced the border guards in the area from which Lyushkov had fled, and they repeatedly engaged in artillery fire against the Japanese positions on the other side of the border. In retaliation, the Japanese attacked the area of Khal Kin Gol and Lake Khazan, and intense fighting caused a large number of casualties on both sides. Stalin had all documents relating to these battles removed from the archives and the Soviet press observed a total blockade of Lyushkov¹¹.

To quench his rage, Stalin once again resorted to the tactic "false targets". He ordered that Yezhov's deputy, Frinovski, be sent to the border to arrest "a dangerous spy" supposed to be arriving by there. On the spot, Frinovski was arrested and executed for having "attempted to flee"¹². As for Lyushkov, his story ended in 1945: he was at the Manchurian army headquarters in Dairen when the Red Army entered the city. A Japanese general killed him so he wouldn't be taken back alive by the Soviets.

Also after Lyushkov's defection, two NKVD residents in China, Romm and Nagi, and several other Soviet agents were recalled to Moscow and executed. Golovachev, the informant to whom Lyushkov had delivered the "Eremin letter" and other forgeries, escaped these reminders; he didn't belong

not in the services, being only a **stouchnik**, one of those piecemeal informants that the NKVD employed in various countries. The recall of the and taken from left — agents not knowing what to do with these documents without instructions, fear that they would end up harming him. Three years later he tried to sell them to the Germans.

Shortly after Lyushkov's defection, another event attracted the attention of the world press: Colonel Rusyanov, whom Golovachev was responsible for passing off as the author of the "Eremin letter" and the forgeries made for this purpose, died suddenly. at the age of fifty-nine. His family suspected either suicide or poisoning. His son found an unusual package in the house, containing office supplies, letterhead and stamps from the Okhrana, as well as photographs of Stalin, Trotsky and Malinovsky; not knowing its origin, he nevertheless decided to keep it. There was no investigation into the death of Roussianov, who was just a Russian émigré in Shanghai among others, of no interest to the Chinese police. His family did not ask for an investigation either, fearing that a report of suicide by poisoning would prohibit their burial in a Russian Orthodox cemetery. Ten years later, the Roussianovs left Shanghai before the capture of the city by the Chinese Communists and settled in Australia. In 1956, son Rousianov sent the Okhrana package to American journalist ID Levine, who was investigating the "Eremin16 letter".

—

On July 9, 1938, Alexander Orlov, Soviet adviser to the Spanish Republic, received orders from Yezhov to return to Moscow¹⁷; he — understood that it would be his end. He remembered his conversation with Pavel Alliluev, brother of Stalin's suicide wife, Nadezhda. He had known him for a long time and had met him at the Soviet pavilion at the Paris International Exhibition in 1937. They had gone for a walk and Allilouev had complained that NKVD agents were following him night and day. Orlov had asked him what was behind the execution of Tukhachevsky and other generals. At the end of a long silence, Allilouev had finally replied: "Alexander, never concern yourself with the Tukhachevsky affair. It would be like breathing poisonous gas." A few months later, Orlov had found a brief obituary notice in the Soviet press: Pavel

Allilouev had died "in the line of duty". In light of their

conversation, Orlov deduced that Stalin had had him assassinated. years later, — Ten
Stalin was going to accuse Allilouev's wife, Evguenia, of having poisoned her husband
Okhrana and of the role that this dossier had — .

played in the Tukhachevsky conspiracy. He understood Allilouev's advice even better:
knowing the Okhrana file was tantamount to a death sentence. Orlov himself had taken a
whiff of this gas when his cousin Zinovy Kastnelson told him of the discovery of this file
by IL Shtein. Kastnelson had been arrested and Shtein had committed suicide. The case was
clear; Orlov took his car and went to France with his wife and daughter; from there he
embarked on a ship bound for Canada. He arrived in Washington on August 13, 1938
and requested political asylum.

He obtained it without great difficulty and lived anonymously for fifteen years, doubting
that the American authorities could protect him for long from the killers of the NKVD. He
waited until Stalin died in 1953 to publish a long-written book, **Secret History of Stalin's
Crimes**. In it he stated that the case of Marshal Tukhachevsky and other executed
generals was "destined to occupy a more significant place in history than it deserves
by itself":

"I say this because I know from absolutely certain sources that the case of Marshal
Tukhachevsky was connected with one of Stalin's most horrible secrets. When this secret is
revealed, it will shed light on many hitherto incomprehensible aspects of Stalin's behavior.

»

And in 1956, he published in the weekly **Life** what he knew of the
Tukhachevsky conspiracy²¹ . —

In December 1938, Yezhov was removed from his position as head of the NKVD and
replaced by Beria; the latter was ordered to "clean Yezhov's nest".

Yezhov was still alive in March 1939, when he appeared as a delegate to the XVIII Party
Congress. During one of the sessions, Stalin asked him to approach the podium. "Well,
what do you think of yourself? he asked her. Can you **[still]** be a member of the Central
Committee? »

Yezhov, his voice overcome with emotion, replied that he had devoted his whole life to
the party and to Stalin and that he loved Stalin more than his

own life. "Really?" Stalin asked, looking surprised. "So who was Frinovski? Did you know Frinovski?" Then Stalin asked who Shapiro, Ryjova, Fedorov were, all Yezhov's assistants and already executed. "Iosif Vissarionovitch!" yelled Yezhov. But you know that it was I, myself, who discovered their plot. I brought it back to you." Stalin interrupted him angrily: "Yes, yes, yes!

you thought you were going to be arrested, you came running. But what had happened before? Did you organize a conspiracy? Did you want to kill Stalin? High-ranking people in the NKVD were conspiring and you allegedly had nothing to do with them! Do you believe that I am blind? Let me refresh your memory then. Who did you delegate on a certain day to mount Stalin's guard? Who? For what? Why were they carrying guns? Why were they near Stalin with revolvers? To kill Stalin? And what would have happened if I hadn't noticed? » —

Once again, Stalin was rewriting history. He wanted to forget that February 18, 1937 when Karl Pauker had brought him a photocopy of Colonel Eremine's report. He had then declared a state of alert, and Yezhov and Frinovski had assigned him armed guards to protect him from "a gigantic conspiracy in the army, such as had never been seen ". Yezhov knew there was no point in arguing when Stalin was twisting everything. "Well? Go away. That will be all," Stalin concluded. Addressing the audience, he asked: "I don't know, comrades, can this man remain a member of the Central Committee?" paused, as if ruminating on a question, and continued: "I have my doubts. Well, you think that's in the past... It's up to you, it's up to you... But I have my doubts."

— Soon after, Yezhov was arrested and executed. Stalin explained to Alexander Yakovlev, the great aircraft designer: "That scoundrel Yezhov!" He wiped out some of the best of us. He was completely rotten. That's why we executed him. » —

In Ukraine, where the conspiracy against him had been formed, the cadres of the NKVD and army were devastated. The purge was led by Nikita Khrushchev, who in January 1938 became the first party secretary of

Ukraine: he had all the members of the Ukrainian Politburo executed. Hundreds
two members of the Central Committee, only three survived, including Grigory Petrovski.
All members of the Ukrainian government were arrested.
Like Petrovski, Stanislas Kossior, the head of this government, was brought before Stalin to be
interrogated. "Well, talk!" Stalin told Kossior. "What can I say?" answered this one. You know
very well that I am a Polish spy. Petrovski, turning to him, reprimanded Kossior: "Stasik, why are
you telling such lies about yourself and mine?"

Kossior replied, "I have made statements and I will not return to them." »
Stalin exclaimed: "You see Petrovski, you didn't want to believe that Kossior had become
a spy. Will you believe now that he is an enemy of the people?" Petrovski was slow to
answer and Stalin had his file brought to him. people like you, we shoot them, he declared to
Petrovski, but I will spare you."27

Petrovski's file contained information about his ties to
the Okhrana, but despite this, if not because of it, he was not arrested; on the other hand, his
two sons were.

Many people arrested at this time were accused of having worked
for Okhrana. One of them was the eminent theater director Vsevolod Meyerhold,
accused of having been an agent under the pseudonym "Semenych29" and of
being a Japanese spy, presumably because Japan was in the news after the Lyushkov's flight,
or else because a Japanese couple had come to Moscow to study Meyerhold's theatrical
ideas; they were arrested and executed (then exonerated after Stalin's death). Meyerhold
was apprehended on June 20, 1939, she had received seventeen stab wounds and had her
eyes gouged out, perhaps because of the superstition that wanted the image of the
murderers to remain engraved there. Only documents had been stolen from the apartment. The
NKVD compiled a file under the mention "Meyerhold-Raïkh, VE". On January 13, 1940,
three days before his trial, Meyerhold appealed to Vishinski, unaware that the latter was
no longer Attorney General, but Commissioner of Foreign Affairs. In it he wrote: "Interrogator
Rodos broke my left hand and left my right for me to sign my statement.

My

statement is false: I could not bear the tortures and disintegration. He forced me to drink urine, to crawl on all fours, me, an old man.

— Meyerhold was led before Ulrikh, who asked him a few quick questions. Meyerhold denied the charges; he was taken to the cellars of the Lubianka, where he was killed by a revolver shot in the neck.

Usually, the corpses of the victims were thrown into secret graves. One of these was on the outskirts of Moscow, near the **Zastava** or Abelman checkpoint, in a deep ravine adjoining the Kalitnikovskoye cemetery. An old paved road led to old slaughterhouses; it was known for a long time as the **Skotogonnaya Doroga**, the "Cattle Route", because it was through it that the herders passed who delivered meat to Moscow. In the 1930s it was frequented by grey-blue trucks in which NKVD men in yellow rubber aprons handled the corpses, usually about thirty per delivery. They grabbed the bodies by the arms and legs and threw them into the ravine. Then they threw a few shovelfuls of earth on it. The corpses piled up there, layer after layer.

NOTES

1. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, *op. cit.*, p. 348, quote from **Bilsovik ukrainy**, June 6, 1938.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 617 *sq.*

3. Vladimir Mikhailov and Viacheslav Bondarenko, **Kurier**, no. 58, June 3-9, 1993, p. 1 and 24.

4. Coox, *op. cit.*, p. 411.

5. *Ibid.*

6. See footnote 3.

7. Coox, *op. cit.*, p. 400, citing the **Pravda** article of 20 December 1937 on Lyushkov.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 413.

9. Recorded interview with RS Osinina, previously divorced from Osinin-Vinnitsky, in Haifa, Israel, 1979, in the author's archives. She was Vitaly Svechinsky's aunt.

10. Coox, *op. cit.*, p. 407.

11. Information provided by VA Korotich, former editor of **Ogoniok**, in a telephone interview with the author, on September 9, 1992, while he was in Massachusetts. Korotich said he tried to find these documents with the help of KGB chief Krushkov.

12. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 323.

13. Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 209. See also Mikhailov and Bondarenko, **op. cit.**

14. See Chapter 28.

15. See Chapter 34.

16. The author examined the contents of this package at ID Levine, in Waldorf, Virginia. The package is still in the Levine archives.

17. Orlov, **Tainaya istoria**, **op. cit.**, p. 13.

18. **Ibid.**, p. 309-311.

19. Interview with IP Itskov. Itskov acted as Alliloueva's lawyer during review of his "rehabilitation trial". See S. Alliloueva, **Twenty Letters to a Friend**, **op. cit.**, p. 182.

20. Orlov, **The Secret History**, **op. cit.**, p. 240 sq.

21. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**, p. 34-44.

22. Medvedev, "Dvadtsatyi vek", **Obshestvenno-politicheskii i literaturnyi almanakh**, n° 2, p. 41 sq.

23. See Chapter 22.

24. Medvedev, "Dvadtsatyi vek", **op. cit.**

25. Hyde, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 377.

26. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 348-350.

27. Medvedev, **Let History Judge**, **op. cit.**, p. 295 sq.

28. **Ibid.**, p. 295. Medvedev cites documents preserved in the Petrovski family archives.

29. **Ibid.**, p. 316.

30. VA Chalikova, Arkhivnyi yunosha, **Neva**, October 1988, p. 152.

31. A. Milchakov, "Ovrag na kalitnikovskom", **Semiya**, no. 40, Moscow, 1988.

32

The assassination of Trotsky

Shortly after the assassination of Ignaz Reiss, Stalin ordered the NKVD to assassinate Trotsky. Reiss, in fact, had informed Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son, of the discovery of Stalin's dossier. Sedov in turn had informed his

father ; Stalin feared that the latter would publish the information.

Trotsky's first assassination attempt took place in January 1938, shortly before Sedov's murder; he escaped without difficulty. His suspicions of Stalin's responsibility took shape after the murders of his son and his assistants Klement and Wolf. Lev Sedov's death deeply affected Trotsky and his wife Natalia Sedova; they had lost not only a beloved son, but also an active collaborator. However, Trotsky gave no credence to the idea that Stalin had been an agent of the Okhrana; it remained inconceivable to him.

Trotsky devoted the summer of 1938 to writing the program of the Fourth International, which opened on September 3 in the house of Alfred and Marguerite Rosmer, in the suburbs of Paris. Twenty-eight delegates representing Trotsky in eleven countries attended, but Trotsky himself was absent; his Soviet citizenship had been revoked and he did not want to apply for that of another country. He lived in Coyoacan, on the outskirts of Mexico City.

Before the Congress, fear of the Kremlin haunted the participants. They decided to hold only one session, to avoid being infiltrated by Soviet agents; they did not know that the man who had organized the murder of Lev Sedov, Mark Zborovski, was already within the walls: he represented the "Russian Section" of the Fourth International. Another NKVD agent, Ramón Mercader, tried unsuccessfully to get himself admitted to Congress.

Sylvia Agelof, one of Trotsky's secretaries, had introduced Mercader to the Rosmers, under the name of "Jacques Mornard". She had met him, fortuitously she thought, when she was returning from New York, shortly before the opening of Congress; in reality, the meeting had been carefully organized by the NKVD in New York and Paris.

Stalin entrusted the assassination of Trotsky to Beria and Leonid Eitingon, the brother of Max Eitingon, quoted above. Leonid Eitingon had already succeeded several

blows in the past: the kidnappings of Kutieпов and Miller, as well as the assassinations of Reiss and Sedov. During the Civil War in Spain, he had led a band of assassins, mainly Hispanic Americans, who executed on Stalin's orders the representatives of leftist parties deemed "unreliable". Caridad Mercader, Cuban and communist fanatic, had become his mistress; his son Ramon had been hired by the NKVD to play the role of a wealthy Adonis. Since Sylvia Agelof was known as Trotsky's trusted secretary, to whom she had easy access, she was the obvious target of the seducer Mercader, and their meeting in Paris had therefore begun as a love affair.

Agelof, active in Russian Jewish circles in New York, was a dull young woman, unaccustomed to being courted; she succumbed to the attentions of Mercader. When she returned to New York in February 1939, Mercader rushed up, armed with a false Canadian passport with the improbable name of "Jacson", no doubt a blunder by the forger; he explained that he used this document to avoid being enrolled in the Belgian army. In October 1939, he left for Mexico, under the pretext of business; Agelof promised to join him there; the occasion would be good to help Trotsky with the editing of the book he was writing on Stalin.

Towards the end of 1939, Agelof indeed left for Mexico. Mercader drove her to Trotsky's house in Coyoacan and picked her up there at the end of the day. The Mexican police had surrounded the house with a protective wall and a disciple of Trotsky permanently stood guard at the entrance. Mercader's role was to recon the house defenses; Meanwhile, Eitingon, preparing his attack, was gathering a band of killers from Spain. Among them was one of the leaders of the Mexican Communist Party, the famous painter David Alfaro Siqueiros, also an official in the miners' union.

The gang also included Vittorio Codovilla, founder of the Argentine Communist Party, and Vittorio Vidali, who had been Eitingon's assistant in Spain.

At 4 p.m. on May 23, 1940, four cars pulled up in front of Trotsky's villa and twenty Eitingon killers in Mexican police uniforms got out; the guard let them pass and he was quickly overwhelmed.

The assassins stormed into the courtyard, chased the other guards away,

set up a machine gun in front of Trotsky's bedroom and

showered him with bullets for about twenty minutes. Then they left as quickly as they had come, carrying off Trotsky's two cars and a hostage guard. Trotsky and his wife, who had hidden under the bed, came out without any harm other than a few scratches from shards of glass. Colonel Salazar, head of the Mexican secret police, asked Trotsky if he suspected anyone. "The author of the attack is Joseph Stalin", replied Trotsky.

Four days later, Sylvia Agelof introduced Mercader to Trotsky as her husband. And two weeks later, Mercader, claiming a business trip to New York, generously left his car with Trotsky. In his absence, the Mexican police established the names of the attackers. The body of the kidnapped guard was found, buried on the farm they had rented.

Siqueiros was arrested and released on bail. The Chilean poet Pablo Neruda, a prominent diplomat and communist, helped Siqueiros escape to Chile.

The assault on Trotsky's villa and the assassination of the guard were not prosecuted and Stalin's responsibility in the affair was not even mentioned. Upon his arrival in

New York, Mercader was given a new mission by Eitingon and Gaïk Ovakimian, agent of the NKVD, but officially consul general of the USSR in New York. The instructions had been dictated to them in detail by "Ivan Vasilyevich", Stalin's code name. Exasperated by the failure of the previous mission, Stalin had indeed decided to take matters into his own hands. He was setting up a new performance of the death of his father Vissarion, years away. He ordered the secret police to assassinate a well-known personality, Solomon Mikhoëls, by hitting him "with an ice ax concealed in a wet lined jacket". He gave exactly the same instructions for the murder of Trotsky: they no doubt seemed absurd to Eitingon, Ovakimian and Mercader, because the wearing of a jacket, and moreover a wet one, was out of place in Mexico in summer, but one did not discuss with Ivan Vasilyevich.

Eitigon and Ovakimian warned Mercader that his mother's fate depended on the success of her mission: if it failed, she would be executed.

On August 17, 1940, Mercader returned to Trotsky's villa. Despite the heat, he wore a black overcoat and a hat. He said he wrote

a draft article on a split among American Trotskyists and asked Trotsky if he would take a look. Trotsky sat down and began to read the article, while Mercader waited, still wearing his hat and holding his overcoat in his hand. His attitude aroused the suspicions of Trotsky, who emerged from his office ten minutes later, visibly agitated, and told his bodyguard, Joseph Hansen, that he was done with Mercader. He suspected Mercader of "dark financial machinations" and ties to the fascists.

On August 20, Trotsky gave in to Sylvia Agelof's entreaties and again agreed to take a look at Mercader's article. Again, the latter was in a hat, holding his overcoat. Trotsky's wife asked him why he was dressed like this; he replied: "It might rain. — »

Trotsky sat down behind his desk and resumed reading the article.

Mercader, seated on the corner of the desk, surreptitiously took out the ice ax and struck Trotsky on the head. His plan was to kill Trotsky and slip out of the villa unseen; Eitingon was waiting for him at the wheel, not far from there, ready to go as quickly as possible. It turned out otherwise. Trotsky uttered a terrible cry, jumped to his feet, threw his dictaphone at Mercader's head and himself rushed at the assassin. He bit his hand and tore his woodpecker off. Mercader, taken aback, had no time to draw the dagger hidden in his overcoat. Natalia Sedov and the guards ran up and overpowered him. Fearing that the guards would kill Mercader, Trotsky weakly said, "He must not be killed... he must speak. Mercader also feared for his life; he shouted: "I was forced to do it. They are holding my mother. They have put her in prison!"⁷ Trotsky died the next day, August 21, 1940.

Stalin arrived at his Kremlin office at noon, as usual. His secretary, Poskrebyshev, calmly placed before him a telegram which read: Trotsky was mortally wounded, possibly killed. Details to follow⁸. —

Poskrebyshev had personally made the wife of Stalin's hatred for Trotsky: on April 30, 1940, he had immediately been married to Lev Sedov, Trotsky's son⁹. after Trotsky's departure for exile, his younger brother, in a camp in Kazakhstan and most of the Sergei, were executed Trotsky's parents, as well as his first wife, were arrested and died in

fields. One of his friends wrote to Trotsky, immediately after Blumkin's execution, to inform him that his eldest daughter, born of his first marriage, had been arrested and that his youngest had died in prison. Platon Volkov, your **[eldest]** daughter's husband was exiled two months ago. Mr. Nevelson, your late daughter's husband, has been in jail for some time. But these ordinary vengeance are insufficient. The friend continued:

This thirst for revenge inhabits Stalin. It is often said in party circles that one evening in Zubalovo he said to Dzerzhinsky and Kamenev: "Choose the victim, carefully prepare the blow, calculate an implacable revenge and then go to bed, there is nothing sweetest in the world."

Last year, Bukharin referred to this conversation ("Stalin's philosophy of sweet revenge"), in his discussion of his fights with the Stalinists¹⁰. »

When Trotsky's death was confirmed, Stalin wrote an editorial for Pravda , under the title "The Death of an International Spy". He declared that Trotsky had been killed by the same terrorists whom he had taught to "prepare their blows in the shadows", that he had "worked with the intelligence services and the staffs of England, France, Germany, Japan" and that having "organized the despicable murders of Kirov, Kuibyshev, Maxim Gorky, he had become the victim of his own intrigues, betrayals and infamy." The satirical magazine Krokodil published a cartoon on **the** cover of Trotsky, ~~with~~ blood spurting from his split skull.

Stalin was beaming when he received Caridad Mercader, the assassin's mother, and presented her with decorations for her and her son. —

Eitingon too was received by Stalin, who gave him a hug and presented him with the Order of Lenin, swearing to him that he would never allow "one of his hairs to be touched." Ramón Mercader was sentenced by a Mexican court to twenty years in prison; he did not reveal that he had acted on the orders of the NKVD and Stalin rewarded him for his silence by assuring him the most pleasant conditions of captivity: a sunny cell overlooking a patio, with authorization to receive regular female visits, the food from the best restaurants and a book and newspaper service¹⁵. Released in August 1960, Mercader was greeted on his release ~~from~~ prison by representatives of the Embassy of Czechoslovakia, who

surrendered a passport; he lived there until the Prague Spring and there was shipped off to Moscow, where he became popular in influential circles as "Trotsky's assassin", and was regularly supplied with drinks, cigarettes and Western luxuries¹⁶. When he died, a tombstone was engraved for him in the name of "Reimond Lopez". His mother, an inveterate drug addict, succumbed to the drugs supplied to her by the secret police. Mercader's brother, Luis, a long-time lecturer at the Institute of Communications in Moscow, eventually went into exile with his family and settled in Madrid, where he wrote a book on Ramon.

Stalin had many reasons for making Trotsky an assassin; one was that he planned to reveal that Stalin had poisoned Lenin.

Perhaps he also suspected that Trotsky would accuse him of having been an agent of the Okhrana. For Trotsky had finally lost his illusions about Stalin; he wrote prophetically that "Stalin wants to strike, not the ideas of his adversary, but his skull". The dictator also knew that Trotsky was preparing a book about him and that he would reveal the meaning of the "confessions" of the show trials. Shortly before his death, Trotsky

wrote: Stalin demonstrated much more than he intended with his trials monstrous; or rather, he failed to demonstrate what he wanted to prove. He simply betrayed the existence of his secret laboratory, he forced one hundred and fifty people to confess to crimes they had never committed. But the totality of these confessions metamorphosed into a confession of Stalin. »

Implacable enemy of fascism, ardently hostile to the policy of rapprochement with Hitler and the non-aggression pact signed with Germany in 1939, he wrote in 1938:

"Fascism runs from victory to victory and finds its ultimate support

[...] in Stalinism. Terrible military threats are on the doorstep of the Soviet Union, but this is the moment Stalin chooses to undermine the Red Army. [...] The time will come when it will be him that history will pass in judgment²⁰. »

NOTES

¹ Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 140. See also D. Volkogonov's text on Trotsky, "The Demon of Revolution", **Pravda**, September 9, 1988, p. 4 (**cf.**

footnote 8 below). Although it is well known that Stalin personally ordered the murder of Trotsky, no confirmation has been published, neither during the Soviet period nor after. In his book on Stalin, the spokesman for the party and the government, Colonel-General Dmitry Volkogonov, devoted an entire chapter to Trotsky, whom he described with unbridled hostility.

Volkogonov seems to have come close to admitting Stalin's responsibility for Trotsky's assassination; he wrote thus: "After Trotsky's death Beria was promoted. In the West Beria has long been held to be the chief executor of decisions concerning Trotsky. I think, however, that for the foreseeable future it will be impossible to obtain documents to confirm or deny these assertions." Despite the many revelations of Stalin's crimes published after his death, indeed, many of them are still ignored by the government and those in charge of the archives. Trotsky's murder is one of these official secrets.

2. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 600 **sq.**

3. **Ibid.**, p. 599.

4. Joel Carmichael, **op. cit.**, p. 473 **sq.**

5. See chapter 36 on the murder of Mikhoels. For the murder of Vissarion, see chapter 4.

6. Carmichael, **op. cit.**, p. 477 **sq.**

7. **Ibid.**, p. 480 **sq.**

8. D. Volkogonov, **op. cit.**

9. Bronislava Poskrebycheva was first married to a prominent party member IP Istkov, whom she divorced to marry Poskrebyshev, hoping it would spare her parents persecution. On the day of her assassination, Beria telephoned her and summoned her to the Lubyanka, alleging that he had something important to show her. Bronislava's corpse was removed from Beria's office in a bag, taken to the internal prison where his death was recorded as a result of cardiac arrest, then to the crematorium, where he was cremated the same day. Istkov reconstructed these events two decades later from archival documents. Recorded interview with IP Istkov, New York, 1989. Author's archive.

10. **Biulletin oppositsii**, no. 9, February-March 1930, p. 9-11.

11. **Pravda**, August 24, 1940.

12. **Krokodil**, September 1940. This caricature was a childhood memory of the author.

13. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 603, citing the work of E. Castro Delgado, **I lost my faith in Moscow**, Paris, 1950.

14. Rapoport and Alexeev, **op. cit.**, p. 504.

15. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 603.

16. Interview with Bora Schraguine, Chappaqua, New York, 1976.

17. Interview with Felix Svetlov, New York, 1991. Interview with Vladimir Goutkin, in New York, in 1993. Goutkin had worked with Luis Mercader in Moscow (author's archives).

18. Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 373. Trotsky for the first time wrote down his impressions of those days in 1923-24 when he had come to believe that Stalin had Lenin poisoned. He wrote an article for a magazine on this subject. Stalin had no doubt been informed of Trotsky's intention to resume his memories in a book.

19. Trotsky, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 421.

20. **Biulletin oppositsii**, no. 65, 1938, quoted by Volkogonov, **op. cit.**

33

Ivan Sousanin and the "Eastern Question"

When he recovered his file from the Okhrana in May 1937, Stalin had every opportunity to wonder into whose hands it had passed. By a strange coincidence, the main roles in the story of this file were held by "Poles", at least people of Polish origin in his eyes, even if they had been Russified for several generations.

Thus of the director of the police, SP Beletski who, at the end of an investigation on the origins of the conflict Malinovsky-Stalin, had decided to exile the second and to archive his file. Of Elena Rozmirovitch, who descended from a family of Russified Polish aristocrats. Of Roman Malinowski, sworn enemy of Stalin, obviously of Polish origin. And of the person who had found the file in the summer of 1926, the chief of the secret police, Felix Dzerzhinsky, of the same origin. After Dzerzhinsky, the file had been intercepted by VP Menzhinsky – another Pole. Eventually, it had fallen into the hands of Marshal

Tukhachevsky, a scion of a long-time Russified Polish family. Stalin had therefore decided to exterminate the parents of all these people, on the pretext that they were "es Stalin indeed projected his hatred on the totality of the supposed social or ethnic group of his enemies. His purges decimated thousands of foreign communists and many Comintern figures, but generally spared small groups of leaders of "brother communist parties". The Polish Communist Party was entirely devastated; only one Polish leader survived, Wladislaw Gomulka, because he had been in prison at the time. purges. Ten thousand Poles were shot in Moscow and fifty thousand in the provinces.³ Their wives were condemned to the ordinary sentence, eight years of forced labor in the camps. Few were those who survived, and the orphanages were filled with children. imprisoned or executed Poles, they were taught to sing: We thank Comrade Stalin for our happy childhood.

In 1937, Stalin got into the habit of going to the Bolshoi to attend the opera of Glinka **Ivan Sousanin** —

tsar). He never stayed until the end and left abruptly in the middle of the second act, after the scene of the Polish soldiers dying in a forest near Moscow; this scene was the reconstruction of a historical episode of 1613, during the invasion of Russia by the Poles. According to popular tradition, a peasant from a village near Moscow, Ivan Sousanin, had offered to lead a detachment of Polish soldiers to the city by a shortcut; in fact, he had led them into the heart of an impenetrable forest where they all perished. Sousanin's heroism had inspired many poems and songs; one of the poems, by KF Ryleev, served as the basis for Glinka's libretto. Stalin passionately followed the death of the soldiers in the forest; in front of him, in his secret dressing room, was a dish of hard-boiled eggs which he helped himself from time to time without taking his eyes off the stage. This mania evokes a pathological case described in 1898 by the psychiatrist B. Appointed by a court to examine a squire named Shebalin, accused of murder, Bekhterev had diagnosed him with paranoia and persecution mania associated with megalomania; another's life was of no value to Shebalin who, incidentally, ate almost exclusively hard-boiled eggs, because he thought it impossible to inject poison into them.

Stalin's fascination with the forest scene reflected his hatred for everything related to Poles. After having exterminated tens of thousands of them on Soviet territory, he now dreamed of dividing Poland between the USSR and Germany and, to conclude the German-Soviet Pact, intended to use Poland as bait. The Munich Accords of 1938 on the partition of Czechoslovakia for Hitler's benefit persuaded Stalin that France and Britain had capitulated; he drew from it an increased admiration for Hitler and an even greater contempt for "decadent" Western democracies.

Vladimir Potemkin, Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, began to openly discuss the partition of Poland; "My poor friend, what have you done?" he declared to the French ambassador in Moscow, René Coulondre, shortly after the Munich conference. I now only see a fourth partition of Poland.

Poland, in fact, had undergone three partitions in 1772, 1793 and 1795, by Russia, Austria and Prussia, to avoid a conflict on the "Eastern question", that is to say the

dismantling of the Ottoman Empire. The Turks had withdrawn from the Balkans, North Africa and the Middle East; similarly, the European powers used Poland as a bargaining chip to settle their conflicts. As a result of the three partitions, the whole eastern part of old Poland, with its vast populations of Ukrainians, Belorussians and Jews, had been wrested from her by Russia.

The geopolitical reasons that had presided over the three previous partitions were totally absent from the plan for a fourth partition. Stalin dreamed of having Germany attack and destroy Poland, using Hitler as a henchman; he was once again applying the scheme of murder by proxy. Towards the end of the 1930s, he planned the total destruction of the Polish nation.

Until March 1939, his project of a German-Russian pact had remained no follow-up, despite the efforts of Kandelaki, his emissary and old accomplice⁸ who, according to the German ambassador in Moscow, Count Werner von Schulenburg, "enjoyed Stalin's confidence." In his address to the XVIIIth Congress, on March 10, 1939, Stalin thundered against "the warmongers who are used to having their chestnuts drawn from the fire". He expressed a wish to improve German-Soviet relations and declared that the French, English and American press had tried to "excite the USSR against Germany, to poison the atmosphere and provoke a conflict, whereas it there are no serious grounds for conflict." The Soviet Union, he declared, intended to steer clear of "the new imperialist war", which was already in its second year. These declarations were favorably received in Berlin¹⁰. —

Hitler had no idea that Stalin aspired to the destruction of Poland and that he had chosen him to pull this chestnut out of the fire.

The U.S. Embassy in Moscow summed up Stalin's message to Washington: "Germany can count on the neutrality of the USSR in the event of a conflict with the Western powers." — » Embassy

from Germany to Moscow saw it more clearly: in his interpretation, the Soviets' interests.

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late, on March 15, his troops occupied Czechoslovakia. But a problem immediately arose for him: what to do with the seven hundred thousand Ukrainians who lived in this part of the country which was called Ruthenia or Carpathian Ukraine? They declared their independence and demanded the protection of the Third Reich. On December 3, 1939, three months after the start of World War II, Ambassador Schulenburg informed Berlin that Stalin opposed Ruthenian independence because it risked becoming the "nucleus of the Ukrainian independence movement". Poland » also had large Ukrainian populations; Hitler entered into secret negotiations with the Poles, offering them Ruthenia in exchange for the free port of Danzig and a corridor which would unite Germany with East Prussia; he also proposed ceding part of Soviet Ukraine to Poland. She refused, and Hitler in turn considered dividing Poland between Germany and the USSR. — He then ceded Ruthenia to Hungary, which had it before the dismantling of the Austro-Hungarian Empire in 1918, and urged Schulenburg to improve German-Soviet relations. —

On April 3, 1939, Hitler abrogated the German-Polish treaty and ordered the Wehrmacht to prepare to attack Poland. Stalin convinced himself that the Führer approved of the plan to partition Poland. On April 17, the USSR ambassador to Berlin, Alexei Merekalov, pleaded for an improvement in German-Soviet relations. Throughout April Stalin's emissaries prepared the ground during talks with the Germans.

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A Soviet stood out in this context: Maxim Litvinov, Commissar for Foreign Affairs, supporter of a rapprochement with the West, and a Jew to boot. Present at the parade of May 1, 1939, he was dismissed the same evening and replaced by Viacheslav Molotov. The next day, Stalin asked Litvinov to appoint the most important Foreign Affairs officials. Molotov, Beria and his assistant, VG Dekanozov, as well as Stalin's assistant, GM Malenkov, moved into his office. Molotov placed before him the list of the thirty diplomats appointed by Litvinov; they were summoned one after another and interrogated by Beria and Dekanozov. Then they were all arrested, without exception. Only one, Evgueny Gnedine, natural son of Alexandre Parvus, survived torture and prison

and was released after Stalin's death. From May to August, in preparation for the so-called "Litvinov case" trial, the Lubyanka interrogators extracted "confessions" from them accusing Litvinov of various crimes. In the end, however, Stalin lost interest and spared Litvinov's life. —

The Chargé d'Affaires in Berlin, Grigory Astakhov, reported that Hitler declared himself delighted by the replacement of Litvinov and the fact that his successor, Molotov, was not Jewish; Ambassador Schulenburg, however, purposely omitted to point out to Hitler that Mrs. Molotov, Polina Jemjoushina, was Jewish. Hitler declared that the dismissal of Litvinov was decisive¹⁹ and that he was therefore disposed to a German-Soviet agreement. Schulenburg received instructions to this effect²⁰. In a letter to Mussolini, Hitler mentioned the readiness of the Kremlin to redirect its relations with Germany, evident since the departure of Litvinov²¹.

Schulenburg proposed as a starting point the conclusion of trade agreements; Molotov replied that it was necessary to establish a political base first, Stalin being eager to reach an agreement on the partition of Poland before discussing commercial questions.

Hitler agreed and announced to his generals that he intended to invade Poland, even if France and Great Britain came to his aid.

The generals objected that the USSR too could come to the aid of Poland; Hitler admitted that it was not excluded that the USSR was interested in its dismantling.

— He was, however, far from suspecting that this was the reason for the Soviet goodwill towards Germany. German Foreign Minister Joachim von Ribbentrop prophesied that France and Britain would not declare war on Germany if the latter secured Soviet neutrality in a German-Polish conflict. The German Embassy in Moscow was notified of imminent negotiations.

— On July 27, 1939, Julius Schnurre, in charge of trade relations with the USSR, invited the Soviet diplomats Astakhov and Baburin to a restaurant in Berlin and told them that two "manly countries" such as Germany and the USSR were much closer to each other in their way of seeing the world as they were "decadent" democracies.

Astakhov nodded in this direction and asked what would be the fate of the Ukrainian and Belarusian regions of Poland if the latter ceased to exist. Schnurre

declared that he took good note of this concern from his interlocutor. Astakhov added that the USSR was also interested in the Baltic countries and Romanian Bessarabia. Schnurre replied that Germany was sympathetic to Soviet ambitions; Astakhov reported the conversation to Moscow.

Hitler planned the invasion of Poland for the end of August 1939, before the rains made the roads impassable for the motorized divisions of the Wehrmacht; on August 18, he ordered Ribbentrop to sign the German-Soviet pact. Stalin wanted to postpone the signing, but Hitler wrote to him that the treaty should be signed on August 23. Stalin cabled his agreement. When the cable was brought to Hitler, he banged his fist on the wall and exclaimed, "I've got the world in my pocket!" »

The pact was signed on August 23, enriched with a secret clause on the partition of Poland along a line marked by the Vistula, and Stalin signed the map indicating the dividing line. More than half a century later, the secret clause was found in the archives of the Soviet CP and it was published²⁷; it also stipulated that Estonia, Latvia and Finland belonged to the Soviet sphere of interests, while Lithuania remained in the German sphere of interests.

The signing was followed by a reception and a banquet. I know how much the German nation loves its Führer, declared Stalin. So I drink to Hitler's health. Ribbentrop drank to the health of Stalin and Molotov²⁸.

When the German delegation left the Kremlin in the early morning, Stalin took Ribbentrop by the arm and said to him: "The Soviet government takes this pact very seriously. I can give you my word of honor that the Soviet Union will not betray its partner.

— The next day Ribbentrop submitted a draft joint communiqué to Stalin. Stalin read it and smiled: "Don't you think, he said, that we should spare public opinion in our countries?" We have been pouring out dumps of insults on each other for years... We must gradually prepare these opinions³⁰. »

Stalin's version, more cautiously worded, was accepted. On his return to Berlin, Ribbentrop confided that he had experienced, in Stalin's entourage, the impression of being among his Nazi comrades. Hitler showered him with compliments for his achievement and called him back

Bismarck". had fixed the attack on Poland on August 26, but on the 25th, alerted by its counterintelligence, Great Britain took him by surprise: it reiterated its commitment to intervene alongside Poland if the latter was attacked. Hitler, furious, railed against his "new Bismarck", who had predicted that Britain would be silent after the signing of the German-Soviet pact. he shouted at him. He rescinded the invasion order.³¹

The days that followed were fraught with tension, both for Hitler and for Stalin. Germany's economy could support a major conflict in 1940, but now it risked getting involved in this conflict one For Stalin, under the threat of a larger conflict, Hitler risked abandoning his offensive on Poland. , the latter was preparing the Wehrmacht for war: "Even the most valiant armies, he argued, risk softening in bloodless victories like those we won in the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. »

Hitler had expected that as soon as his attack was launched, the Soviets would occupy the regions of Poland indicated in the secret clause of the pact. Reports from his secret services alarmed him: the Red Army was withdrawing from the Soviet-Polish border. Molotov provided him with a flawed explanation: the USSR being bound by its constitution, the German-Soviet pact had to be ratified by the Supreme Soviet, which had not yet had time to do so. The Supreme Soviet ratified the pact on August 31; the next day, German troops crossed the Polish border.

On September 3, 1939, France and Great Britain declared the war on Germany. "God have mercy on us if we lose," Goering muttered when he heard. On September 6, Poland asked for help from the USSR; Molotov replied that his country had no intention of intervening.

Despite its courage, the Polish army was no match for the German motorized divisions. The Wehrmacht advanced towards the Vistula border line. Schulenburg urged Molotov to have the Red Army occupy the areas assigned to him. But Stalin was not ready to sound the bells and whistles. He had realized that his complicity with Hitler in the dismemberment of Poland would be considered by world opinion as villainy. He was looking for a stratagem to

the impression that he had nothing to do with the destruction of the Polish state.

"Hitler thinks he was smarter than me, but I was the one who tricked him,"³⁴ — he said.

September 17, 1939. The Red Army encountered no resistance. Polish General Mecheslav Smoravinski had ordered his troops not to fight Soviet units and the Polish government ordered them to surrender to them. Soviet planes dropped leaflets calling on Polish soldiers to kill their superiors and government officials.

Several Polish officers were shot by the Soviets during their surrender and fifteen thousand were taken prisoner and deported to the USSR in three separate camps. Most were reservists mobilized at the declaration of war. In December, they were allowed to send their families greeting cards, which were interpreted as a sign of their imminent release.

But the partition had taken place: one hundred and eighty thousand Poles were deported to Siberia and during the next two years their number rose to 1,200,000. On March 5, 1940, Stalin convened the Politburo and obtained its agreement to the execution of the fourteen thousand seven hundred officers prisoners of the camps of Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostakhovo, and eleven thousand other officers, factory owners, landowners, civil servants and priests detained in various camps and prisons in territories under Soviet occupation etiquette. Stalin affixed his signature to the documents of this decision: these were found in 1992 in the personal archives of Mikhail Gorbachev and published by the Yeltsin government³⁵.

The NKVD instituted a special system for the execution of Polish officers in the three camps. BZ "Bakcho" Kobulov, Beria's deputy, summoned the heads of the NKVD in the Smolensk, Kalinin and Kharkov regions and read to them the order from the "supreme authority" to execute the prisoners in the camp of their region. Prisoners from the Ostakhovo camp were taken to the NKVD prison on Sovietskaya Street in Kalinin; there, the master of the place, Lieutenant-Colonel AM Roubanov,

had a soundproof room installed for the executions. The prisoners were gathered in the next room, the "Lenin Hall" and then, with their hands tied, they were pushed into the death chamber, where Rubanov and a delegate from Moscow, BM Blokhin, waited for them behind the door and killed them with a bullet in the back of the neck. The same method was used at the NKVD in Kharkov, where the prisoners of the Starobelsk camp were murdered.

The massacre of the prisoners of the Kozelsk camp was organized differently; they were informed that they were being transported to another camp and, before their departure, they were vaccinated against typhus and cholera, they were told. They were left with their personal effects. It was only after they arrived in the Katyn Forest near Smolensk that they began to suspect that their end was near. One of them, Major Solski, kept a diary in which he recorded his observations until his death. His last lines are dated April 9

1940: "A few minutes before 5 a.m. they woke us up to embark on trucks divided into small cells, each of which was guarded. We arrived in a small forest that looked like a vacation spot. They took away our wedding rings and our watches, which marked 6:30 a.m. What will happen to us?" »

Their hands were tied and they were led in small groups towards already dug pits; there they were shot with a bullet in the back of the neck. In a hurry to get it over with, the executioners did not search the bodies. It was thus that many personal effects, including Solski's diary, were buried with their owners in these mass graves. A small number of Poles resisted; they were dragged to the pits, their long military tunics tied around their heads, and they were shot; some had their skulls shattered, others were finished off with bayonets. When it was over, the executioners planted young pines to mask the massacre. These officers were educated men. A few might know **Ivan Sous**

On October 26, Beria signed a secret circular awarding one hundred and forty-four NKVD officers from the Smolensk, Kalinin and Kharkov regions with various awards "for carrying out special missions". Forty-four officers received an extra month's salary, the others eight hundred rubles each. At the top of the list was captain FK Ilyin, deputy head of the NKVD in the Smolensk region, who had led the

Katyn Massacre. We do not know much about the rest, except that a certain Sukharev, who had boasted that he had "done a good job that day" for his eight hundred rubles, shot himself in the head a few years later and that Rubanov and Blokhin became alcoholics and also committed suicide. As for the others, as Adam Oulam says, "nothing threatens them, except the Last Judgment."

Relations between Stalin and Hitler remained good for a few months after the partition of Poland, then there were hitches here and there. On September 27, 1939, Ribbentrop came to Moscow. Stalin made him observe that the division of the Polish population could create troubles and points of discord between the USSR and Germany; he offered to exchange the region of Lublin, populated by Poles, for Lithuania. Ribbentrop accepted, but demanded the oil region of Drogobitch in exchange for Germany, because the USSR already had ample oil resources, while Germany did not. Stalin objected that "the Ukrainian people had strongly asserted their rights over this region", and promised to sell oil to the Germans. The German-Soviet communiqué declared that, since the disappearance of Poland was a fact, there was no longer any reason to continue hostilities, adding that France and Great Britain were the real aggressors.

Moreover, the Soviet Union and Germany had agreed to engage in "mutual consultations in the event that the war continued".

The two countries also agreed to population exchanges, and the NKVD handed over a large number of refugees to the Germans, mostly Jews who had believed they had found refuge in the USSR. Finally, they agreed on police measures to combat Polish nationalist agitation.

In October 1939, Stalin forced Latvia and Estonia to sign a "mutual assistance pact" with him, which allowed the Soviets to set up bases in these two countries. He tried to force Finland into a similar arrangement, but the Finns refused. On November 29, Stalin accused them of bombing the Leningrad region, and the Red Army invaded their country. Otto Kuusinen, a Finnish communist whose son was in prison in Moscow, was appointed head of a puppet government that was to run Finland. The Finns opposed to the USSR a

fierce resistance and inflicted heavy losses: fifty thousand dead and two hundred thousand wounded, more than the entire Finnish army.

The Finnish resistance aroused international sympathy, even in Germany. France and Britain urgently discussed military relief to Finland. The USSR was expelled from the Society of

nations. In March 1940, Stalin made peace overtures and agreed to minor mutual concessions of territory.

The Finnish campaign shed a brutal light on the weakness of the Army red after the massive purges of its executives. Stalin, of course, did not hold himself responsible for this. That same March he ordered the NKVD to prepare a new show trial of conspirators who had "not yet been exposed in the Tukhachevsky conspiracy". A new wave of arrests decimated the Red Army.

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Stalin's trials impressed Hitler; they convinced him that Stalin was an enemy of "Jewish Bolshevism" and that his dictatorship was compatible with Nazism. He called Stalin "the wily Caucasian" and assured that he enjoyed his "unconditional respect". At the height of praise, he declared that he was "one of the most extraordinary people in the history of the world". He wrote to Mussolini thus: Stalin claims to have been the herald of the Bolshevik revolution. In fact, he identifies with the Russia of the tsars and he has only revived the tradition of pan-Slavism. For him, Bolshevism is only a means, a ruse to dupe the Germanic and Latin peoples.

— "He saw Stalin as a rival worthy of him⁴³ and "a kindred spirit⁴⁴". Stalin too considered Hitler a kindred spirit, especially in his dislike of Jews. The rupture therefore did not occur for personal reasons, but for a conflict of interests in the eternal "question of the Orient".

Events did not follow the course foreseen by the two dictators. On May 10, 1940, Winston Churchill became Prime Minister of Great Britain. On the same day, Hitler attacked France, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Belgium. On May 21, the German army advanced towards the English Channel, forcing the English to evacuate Dunkirk. The French army was defeated. On June 10, Italy declared war on France and Great Britain.

Brittany. In France, the President of the Council, Paul Reynaud, resigned. Petain signed the armistice. Churchill remained alone against the Nazis.

The defeat of France led Stalin to believe that the German victory was near; he ordered the occupation of the Baltic countries and "admitted" them into the USSR as new constituent republics. At the end of June, he annexed Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina, proclaiming this territory an integral part of the Moldavian Socialist Republic. But the annexation of Bukovina went beyond the terms of the secret protocol.

Hitler decided that he would not let Stalin occupy what remained of Romania; in August and September he dispatched his troops there and annexed part of Romanian Transylvania to Hungary and the province of Dobruja to Bulgaria. The shadow of the "Eastern Question" fell over German-Soviet relations. As before, territories that had belonged to the former Ottoman Empire became a bone of contention between Russia and Germany. Poland, already partitioned, could no longer be used for bargaining. The annexation of Bukovina was only the beginning of the conflict between the two dictators.

In September 1940, the Germany-Italy-Japan Tripartite Pact was signed. Stalin intended to join in to participate in the sharing of future victories. Molotov went to Berlin in November to discuss the conditions under which the USSR would join the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo axis.

Hitler welcomed him warmly and explained to him his grandiose plan for the division of the world between Germany and its allies. Molotov listened attentively and, after agreeing in principle, observed that certain points required clarification.

The same day, after a speech on the **Lebensraum** ("living space"), Ribbentrop told Molotov that the Nazi ambitions were limited to the former German colonies of Central Africa, while those of Italy were focused on North Africa. North and West. Finally, he suggested that Russia too should look south, towards the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, in search of an outlet there. Molotov appreciated these suggestions. The problem was that Ribbentrop was unaware of Hitler's latest plans for the region.

The next day, Hitler resumed negotiations with Molotov. He was no longer question of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, but of the next

dismemberment of the British Empire; what Germany offered to the USSR, to extend its sphere of influence, was towards India and the Indian Ocean. Gustav Hilger, German foreign affairs expert on Soviet questions, wrote that "the conflicting aims of the partners became so evident that there was no hope of reaching an agreement." Hitler referred to a German-Soviet verbal agreement according to which the former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire would fall into the German sphere of influence⁴⁸; it had to do with the Balkans. He believed that the spirit of the German-Soviet Pact was to restore the territorial possessions of the two empires which he and Stalin had inherited; Hitler considered himself the heir to the former German Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while Stalin would be the heir to the former Russian Empire. Obviously, one and the other also inherited the reasons for discord between these disappeared empires.

On November 12, 1939, after the interview with Molotov, Hitler told Goering that he had made the decision to crush the USSR. He did not attend the last interview with Molotov, which took place in an air raid shelter, because of the British bombardment of the capital on the 13th. Ribbentrop said the crucial point was whether the USSR was "willing and willing to in a position to co-operate" with Germany for the dismantling of the British Empire, and he gave his interlocutor a new secret draft protocol; he expressed the hope that an agreement between the USSR and the Axis powers would satisfy Soviet aspirations towards India. Molotov insisted on the USSR's interest in the Middle East, Turkey, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Yugoslavia and Greece.

Ribbentrop asked him to sign the protocol stipulating that the aspirations of the USSR would be located in the Indian Ocean zone⁵¹; Molotov replied that he could not enlist without Stalin's consent.

Stalin was deeply struck by the fact that the last conversation took place in an air-raid shelter. This matched a message he had received the day before Molotov left for Berlin. The USSR ambassador in London, Ivan Maiski, informed him there that in his opinion Germany had lost the war in the air over Great Britain. Stalin deduced from this that Hitler was in a weak position and that it was time to extract concessions from him on the Middle East. On November 25, he sent a message to

Hitler. The Soviet Union was ready to accept the project of a quadripartite agreement (Germany, Italy, Japan, USSR), but with one modification: the region south of Baku and Batum, in the direction of the Persian Gulf, constituted "the center of the aspirations of the Soviet Union". He affirmed this twice and asked for military bases in the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, specifying that in the event of Turkish resistance, "the Soviet Union would agree to fully implement the necessary diplomatic and military measures⁵³".

Until then, Hitler had taken little interest in the Middle East, but he had changed his strategy. The reason for this was his aerial failure in Great Britain, which announced a long war; Germany would become increasingly dependent on foreign oil supplies. If he had occupied Romania in August 1940, it was to secure the oil fields of Ploesti. The vast resources of Iraq and Iran obviously interested him, and his agents stoked anti-British sentiment there.

Stalin's claims to "the territory south of the Baku-Batum line" therefore contradicted his own. Moreover, in his pathological hatred of the Jews, Hitler considered that the Jewish population of Palestine under British mandate constituted a "Jewish threat" which he wanted to eliminate. In 1939 Arab fanatics in Palestine formed a shadow government under the mufti of Jerusalem, Hajj Amine el-Husseini; it had even provoked riots and the Arab revolt of 1939 and the English"

. In May 1941, the pro-German organizations in Palestine had been dissolved and el Husseini had fled to Germany.

But Hitler nevertheless cultivated pro-German feelings among Arab nationalists hostile to the creation of the Jewish Homeland of Palestine. As early as 1939, the Germans had taken over from the Italians in radio broadcasts in Arabic vituperating the English and the Jews.

For Hitler, the prospects were promising in the Middle East, and Soviet ambitions in this region incompatible with his interests.

On December 18, 1940, he signed a secret order, codenamed "Operation Barbarossa". In it he declared: "The Wehrmacht must be prepared for

crush the Soviet Union in a swift campaign. the invasion was set " The date of for May 15, 1941.

NOTES

1. Jan Pilsudski, **Rok 1920 z provody pracy Toukachewsskiego**, "**Pocho za Wizle**", Warsaw, 1931 moment of the Soviet-Polish war of 1920. In his "final testimony", presumably written by Stalin, during the trial of June 11, 1937, Primakov also referred to the non-Russian origin of his fellow defendants. **see** chapter 28.

2. Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 582.

3. **Ibid.**, p. 583-585.

4. Interview in Moscow in 1957 with Richard Vinaver, one of the Polish orphans formerly placed in orphanages.

5. In her autobiographical memoirs (**My Russia, My Love**, **New York Post**, September 26, 1984), Galina Vishnevskaya, singer at the Bolshoi and wife of the cellist and conductor Mstislav Rostropovitch, reports that "in Stalin's dressing room, there was always a big bowl with boiled eggs."

6. Oleg Moroz, "Poslednii diagnosis", **Literatournaya gazeta**, September 28, 1988.

7. René Coulondre, **From Stalin to Hitler**, Paris, 1950, p. 165.

8. Krivitsky, **I was Stalin's Agent**, **op. cit.**, p. 38 sq.

9. Lionel Kochan, **The Struggle for Germany, 1914-1945**, New York, 1967, p. 118, citing Schulenburg's report to Berlin, GFM 2/1907/429293-4.

10. **Documents on German Foreign Policy**, Series D, vol. II, Washington and London, 1954-1962, p. 225-229.

11. Kochan, **op. cit.**, p. 73, citing **Foreign Relations of the United States, Soviet Union, 1933-1939**, p. 748 sq.

12. **Documents on German Foreign Policy**, **op. cit.**, series D, vol. III, p. 139.

13. **Ibid.**, vol. V, p. 138-140.

14. Treadgold, **op. cit.**, p. 335.

[15.](#) Kochan, **op. cit.**, p. 120, citing **Foreign Relations of the United States, Soviet Union, 1933-1939**, vol. IV, p. 441 and 590.

[16.](#) Adam B. Ulam, **Stalin**, New York, 1973, p. 508, citing RJ Sontag and JS Beddie, eds., **Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, Documents from the Archives of the German Foreign Office**, p. 2.

[17.](#) Kochan, **op. cit.**, p. 74 and 120, citing **Foreign Relations of the United States, Soviet Union, 1933-1939**, vol. I, p. 1 sq.

[18.](#) Evgueny Griedine, **Katastrofa i vtoroe rozhdenie**, Amsterdam, 1977, p. 107-109.

[19.](#) **Documents on International Affairs, 1928-1963**, vol. I, 1939-1946, p. 446.

[20.](#) Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 296 sq.

[21.](#) **Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941, op. cit.**, p. 81.

[22.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 6.

[23.](#) **International Military Tribunal**, vol. XXXVII, Nuremberg, 1947, p. 550.

[24.](#) Ulam, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 508. Carl von Weizsacker, Ribbentrop's deputy, sent a coded cable to Schulenburg: "Contrary to the previous plan, we have decided to open definitive negotiations with the Soviet Union. »

[25.](#) **Ibid.**

[26.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 510.

[27.](#) The secret protocol, with the map and Stalin's signature, was published by the Yeltsin government, **The New York Times**, August 19, 1989, p. A1-5.

[28.](#) **Documents on German Foreign Policy, op. cit.**, series D, vol. VII, p. 225-229.

[29.](#) Alan Bullock, **A Study in Tyranny**, New York, 1964, p. 531.

[30.](#) Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 304.

[31.](#) Ulam, **op. cit.**, p. 512.

[32.](#) Albert Speer, "Nazi Invasion of Poland? September 1, 1939", **The New York Times**, August 31, 1979, p. A-23.

[33.](#) **Ibid.**, note 31.

[34](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 128.

[35](#) **The New York Times**, 15 October 1992, p. 1 and 8.

[36](#) **Novoe vremia**, no. 46, 1992, p. 48.

[37](#) Polish Red Cross Report, **The New York Times**, February 17, 1989, p.

A-9.

[38](#) Ulam, **op. cit.**, p. 513.

[39](#) **Ibid.**, note 36.

[40](#) **Documents on German Foreign Policy**, **op. cit.**, series D, vol. VIII, p. 160.

[41](#) Solomon F. Bloom, **Commentary**, May 1957, p. 417.

[42](#) **Ibid.**

[43](#) Robert GL Waite, **The Psychopathic God: Adolf Hitler**, New York, 1977, p. 76.

[44](#) Solomon F. Bloom, **op. cit.**, p. 417.

[45](#) Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 323.

[46](#) **Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941**, **op. cit.**, p. 221 sq.

[47](#) **Ibid.**, note 45.

[48](#) **Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941**, **op. cit.**, p. 234-237.

[49](#) Bullock, **op. cit.**, p. 622.

[50](#) **Nazi-Soviet Relations 1939-1941**, **op. cit.**, p. 221 sq.

[51](#) **Ibid.**, p. 247-254.

[52](#) **Ibid.**

[53](#) **Ibid.**, p. 258 sq.

[54](#) George E. Kirk, **A Short History of the Middle East**, New York, 1964, p. 194-199.

[55](#) **Ibid.**

[56](#) **Ibid.**

[57](#) **Documents on German Foreign Policy**, **op. cit.**, series D, vol. XI, p. 899.

34

The war and the massacre of October 1941

Events in Yugoslavia prevented Hitler from attacking the USSR on the scheduled date, that of May 15, 1941. Serbian officers hostile to Germany; Hitler found himself compelled to send troops destined for Poland to that country. The attack on the Soviet Union was delayed for more than a month. —

On April 3, 1941, Churchill sent a telegram to Stalin warning that Hitler intended to attack the Soviet Union. — Stalin received messages to this effect from several sources, but he did not take them into account, judging them dictated by the intention of sowing discord between Hitler and himself. A former Czech agent in Berlin, codenamed "Shkvor", reported to Soviet intelligence about German troop concentrations on the border; Stalin read his message and wrote on it in red: "English provocation". He ordered the NKVD to liquidate Shkvor³. Several reports of the impending German attack were sent by Sorge, the main Soviet spy in Japan, to no further effect. Soviet intelligence was little more helpful: Marshal FI Golikov, head of the military secret service, dismissed further warnings to this effect as coming from a "dubious source"; he feared, indeed, to incur the accusation of being a British agent provocateur.

Meanwhile, Stalin continued to deal with enemies in the army who planned to kill him. A new wave of arrests of officers swept through the spring of 1940. They were forced to sign depositions that they had participated in a conspiracy led by the Deputy Commissar of Defense, General KA Meretskov. About forty similar depositions were collected at the end of the spring of 1941. Stalin intended to have Meretskov arrested without delay. He had to change his mind.

On April 5, 1941, the head of the Kremlin invited, late in the evening, the ambassador of Yugoslavia, Milan Gabrilovitch, representative of the

anti-German rebel government, to sign a non-aggression pact.

Hitler interpreted the gesture as a clear challenge to Germany. In the following days, the Wehrmacht occupied Yugoslavia and Greece. On April 13, the neutrality pact between the USSR and Japan was signed. After a dinner at the Kremlin, the Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs, Yosuke Matsuoka, was driven to the station where he took the Trans-Siberian to return to his country. To the surprise of the journalists and diplomats who had come to greet Matsuoka, Stalin appeared on the platform. He gave the Japanese a hug and said, "We are both Asians." He added that he considered the United States and Great Britain enemies of the Soviet Union. Germany, Werner von Schulenburg, he put his arm on his shoulder and told him: "We must remain friends and you must do everything for that. He gave much the same speech to the German military attache, General Hans Krebs⁶.

On May 1, 1941, Stalin appeared as usual at the top of Lenin's mausoleum, to watch the parade. Beside him, in the place of honor, stood the new ambassador to Berlin, VG Dekanozov, Beria's former deputy. A native Armenian of Gori, a common criminal in his youth, Dekanozov enjoyed Stalin's confidence. On May 6, Stalin assumed the post of Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, equivalent to that of Prime Minister. Schulenburg informed Berlin that, in his view, Stalin wanted to correct certain mistakes by Molotov, which had refreshed German-Soviet relations. According to Hilger, an adviser to Schulenburg quoted above, Stalin wanted to use "all the authority of his person" to improve relations between the two countries. Nevertheless, returning to Moscow after a brief trip to Berlin where he had been received by Hitler, Schulenburg was convinced that Hitler had indeed decided to attack the Soviet Union. "The dice are cast, he confided to embassy officials who came to greet him at the airport, war against Russia has been decided⁸! »

On May 13, the Tass news agency declared that the rumors of a German intention to attack the Soviet Union were baseless. To appease Hitler, Stalin closed the embassies of Yugoslavia and Greece. On June 18, the Soviet ambassador in London, Maiski, reported to Stalin the transfer of one hundred and forty-seven German divisions near the border

Soviet; he had learned it from the secretary at the Foreign Office, Anthony Eden. Stalin quietly left for his annual vacation in the Caucasus, having left the order to avoid any border incidents.

When he arrived in Sochi on June 20, he received a message from the Commissar of the Navy, Nikolai Kuznetsov: all German ships had left Soviet territorial waters. He took this information more seriously than the others and gave several guidelines for preparing for the conflict. He also instructed Molotov to undertake a diplomatic offensive with the help of Schulenburg, to restore relations with Hitler. Molotov saw Schulenburg on June 21, 1941, at 9 p.m., and the German promised to do his best.

The following day, the German troops launched the offensive throughout from the German-Soviet border, from the Baltic to the Black Sea. The tanks advanced rapidly into enemy territory, breaking through the Red Army lines and taking prisoners by whole units. Schulenburg came to Molotov's office in the early hours of the morning and read him the declaration of war. "I know it's war!" exclaimed Molotov.

Your air force has already bombed ten villages. What have we done to deserve this¹⁰? At noon, the radio broadcast Molotov's communiqué: the war had begun with the attack of "fascist brigands". For ten days Stalin did not once address the country, which nevertheless awaited his exhortations. War against Germany had not been part of his plans and he had difficulty in abandoning his illusions of an alliance with Hitler. As the panzers advanced into the USSR, he clung to the idea that this was a "provocation" of a few undisciplined units.

He remained obsessed with the fantasy of a conspiracy by General Meretskov, which he planned to "unmask" at the next show trial.

The day after the German attack, in fact, Meretskov was summoned immediately to Moscow; he was arrested there on his arrival. Two of Beria's assistants, VN Merkulov and LE Vladzimersky, accused him of having taken part in a military conspiracy and of "conspiring with Kork and Uborevich to fight Stalin". This formula, "fight Stalin", was not good usual Russian and suggests that it was Stalin who had written the accusation. Meretskov was shown the depositions of about forty "plotters" which confirmed the accusation. He denied ever plotting

with Kork and Uborevich, who had moreover been executed in June 1937 at the same time as Tukhachevsky. Merkulov and Vladzimersky applied "physical restraint measures" to him, a euphemism for beatings with rubber truncheons. — Among Meretskov's

"accomplices" was Defense Industry Commissioner BL Vannikov, Lieutenant-General YV Smoushkevich, Colonel-General G. Mr. Shtern, and several members of the military high command. Two days into the war, Major Maria Nesterenko, Air Force ace and commander of a special unit, was arrested. Married to Lieutenant General PB Rygachov, one of the apprehended officers, she was accused in these terms: "Having been Rygachov's beloved wife, she could not but know of her husband's treacherous activities." » —

During the first week of the war, Stalin refused to see any member of the Politburo, with the exception of Beria, with whom he discussed the depositions of Meretskov and other "conspirators", as well as the scenario of the show trial. But on June 30, 1941, a group of Politburo members saw him and begged him to take immediate action to remedy the situation at the front. Stalin then became aware of the reality of the threat that the war posed to his regime; he named himself commander-in-chief and head of the **stavka**, the HQ. His breathless radio message was recorded in Sochi and broadcast repeatedly on July 3, while he was on his way to Moscow. The train stopped several times to check that the tracks were not mined. Stalin, in fact, only took the train, being afraid of the plane. —

Upon his arrival in Moscow, he instructed Beria to extract depositions from arrested officers that Mikhail Kaganovich, the younger brother of Politburo member Lazar Kaganovich, was an agent of Hitler whom the latter intended to appoint as "Vice President of Russia". after the victory. Before the war, Mikhail Kaganovich had been Commissar of Aviation Industry; Stalin therefore accused him of having had the aviation factories built near the border so that the Germans could seize them in the event of war. Stalin informed the members of the Politburo of this, and Lazar Kaganovich replied: "Stalin praised the latter as a "man of principles".

Mikhail Kaganovich was taken to Mikoyan's office for a face-to-face meeting with a prisoner who repeated his accusations.

The truth was that it was Stalin himself who had built the factories near the border, because he considered Hitler an ally and saw no conflict with him. Likewise, it was Hitler who said that after the victory against the USSR, the administration of the country should be entrusted to Stalin, because he was best suited to command the Russians. —

Mikoyan reported that during the confrontation, Mikhail Kaganovich asked to go to the bathroom; we then heard a gunshot¹⁷. —

But the story is more than dubious, because no one was allowed to enter the Kremlin with a weapon on him; it is therefore much more likely that Mikhail Kaganovich was shot by one of Stalin's bodyguards. He was buried in the cemetery of Novodievichy, near Nadezhda Alliloueva. A few years later, his wife joined him there. —

The rapid advance of the Germans in the USSR forced Stalin to request the help from Western democracies. On July 11, the Agreement for Joint Action between Great Britain and the USSR was signed, with immediate effect.

— Among those present at the signing was Maxim Litvinov, a former foreign affairs commissar, whom Stalin had suddenly appointed ambassador to the United States. Harry Hopkins, President Roosevelt's personal emissary who arrived in Moscow at the end of July, was impressed by Stalin's precise knowledge of the needs of the Red Army and his legendary ability to remember numbers and details.

Litvinov served as interpreter. Hopkins compared its sudden reappearance to that of "a coat put away during the isolation period of the USSR and suddenly brought out after being dusted, as a symbol of change". Stalin instructed Hopkins to tell Roosevelt that the Soviet government "would be glad to see American troops on any point on the Soviet front and under American command."

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On July 16, in fact, near Vitebsk, the Germans had captured hundreds of thousands of Red Army soldiers and officers, including a thirty-three-year-old first lieutenant, Yakov Djougashvili, the eldest son that Stalin had had from his first marriage. The German planes flew over the Russian troops and dropped a rain of

leaflets bearing the photo of this exceptional prisoner, inviting the combatants to follow his example and to surrender. When one of these pamphlets was shown to Stalin, he had his daughter-in-law, Yulia Meltzer, a Jewess, arrested, accusing her of being a Nazi spy and of having "thrown her husband into the arms of the Germans". Their daughter, Goulia, was then four years old.

Yakov refused to cooperate with the Germans; one of his interrogators noted:
Open and intelligent

face, typically Georgian. Correct compliment. Spoke to his father for the last time by telephone before leaving for the front. Has categorically rejected any compromise between communism and capitalism. Does not believe in a final victory for the Germans²¹. " In autumn

1941, Hitler granted him preferential treatment²²: he was lodged in the hotel Adlon, the most famous palace in Berlin, where the Germans tried to use it for their propaganda. Georgian emigrants in Germany were allowed to visit him, but Yakov Dzhughashvili also refused to cooperate with them. In April 1942, he was transferred to a prisoner of war camp near Lübeck, where his sleeping neighbor was René Blum, the son of the former Prime Minister Léon Blum. offered to exchange Yakov for Marshal Friedrich von Paulus, captured by the Soviets, but Stalin had him answered by Count Folke Bernadotte, president of the Red Cross, that he was not exchanging "marshals for soldiers".

Yakov, depressed, refused to eat, hurt by his father's slogan: "There are no prisoners of war, there are only traitors", which the camp radio broadcast incessantly.

After several escape attempts, Yakov Dzhughashvili was transferred at the Sachsenhausen death camp; ironically, his companions were Polish officers captured by the Germans in 1939. Like their English and French comrades, they received parcels and money from their parents, and even from the Polish government in exile in London, through the Red Cross. But Yakov and the other Soviet prisoners received nothing; the Poles shared their monthly parcels with him and he made friends with those of them who spoke Russian; he tried several times to escape in their company²³.

One evening a quarrel broke out with English officers, who reproached him for not

clean up after he passed, and an Englishman punched him in the face. Yakov Djougashvili rushed outside and threw himself on the electrified barbed wire. A guard fired. Stalin's son collapsed, dead. He was cremated at the camp crematorium. When he learned that his son had refused to collaborate with the Germans and that he had been killed in a prison camp, two years later, Stalin had his widow released from Lefortovo prison, where she was incarcerated, under a isolation regime. Yulia left the prison crippled and died shortly afterwards²⁵. His daughter Goulia survived.

In August 1941, Churchill and Roosevelt held a conference on a warship off Newfoundland and agreed to extend the **lend-lease**¹ aid plan to the USSR. William Bullitt, former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, urged Roosevelt that Stalin commit in writing to renounce all expansion into the Far East and to keep the borders of the USSR after the war as they were. in August 1939. He warned Roosevelt against Stalin's imperialist aims; for him, these ambitions would be thwarted if Stalin renounced the Polish territories, the Baltic States and Romania, which he had annexed. Roosevelt disagreed: "I have a feeling that Stalin is not one of those kind of men.

Harry **[Hopkins]** thinks he's not. If I give him everything I can give him and ask nothing in return, **noblesse oblige**, he won't try to annex anything and will work with me for a world of democracy and peace. »

Bullitt replied that when he spoke of **noblesse oblige**, Roosevelt was dealing not with the Duke of Norfolk, but with a Caucasian bandit who, when he got something for nothing, thought his interlocutor was a fool. Roosevelt, annoyed, ended the conversation by saying, "It's my responsibility, not yours, and I'll follow my intuition." »

On September 28, 1941, the British Minister for Defense Aircraft Industry, Lord Beaverbrook, and Roosevelt's Deputy Ambassador, Averell Harriman, arrived in Moscow. It was the day German armor had broken through the Soviet defenses and was approaching Orel, the last major city on the way to Moscow. Stalin had hitherto urged Churchill to open a second front "somewhere in

the Balkans or in France", but at that moment he suddenly demanded the landing of thirty English divisions at Arkhangelsk, or else their routing towards the front through Iran. Yet Churchill was already experiencing great difficulty in raising two **divisions** to the defense of the Middle East against the Afrikakorps, observing:

It is almost unbelievable that the head of the Soviet government, with all the advice of his experts, indulges in such nonsense. It seems impossible to speak with a man who thinks in terms of utter unreality. »

—

Beaverbrook and Harriman saw in Stalin a competent leader and aware of the threat hanging over his country. During a meeting on September 30, Beaverbrook noticed that Stalin was scribbling wolves on a red background. Others had already noted this kind of drawings. The Briton was unaware that the wolf represented an enemy for Stalin³⁰ that he symbolized the conspirators —, And whom Stalin intended to eliminate with a simple stroke of a red pencil.

All soldiers arrested, with the exception of Colonel-General AD Loktionov, had signed "confessions" extracted under torture. During a face-to-face with Meretskov, the alleged leader of the conspiracy, Loktionov, still grimacing in pain, stretched out his bloody hands and shouted: "Kiril Afanasievich, you know this didn't happen... This didn't happen. It didn't happen! It didn't happen!" He fell silent when his eyes met those of Meretskov, who had suffered the same tortures. —

Suddenly, Stalin decided that these men would be more useful to him alive than dead. Defense Industry Commissioner BL Vannikov, for example, had signed extravagant confessions under torture; he was awaiting execution, when he received from Stalin the following order: State in writing your proposals for the development of armaments production in the context of current military actions. — » Vannikov

was therefore released and reinstated in his post. Meretskov was also freed and summoned to the Kremlin. Stalin walked up to him and said, "Hello, Comrade Meretskov. How are you³³? And he was also reinstated in his functions. But it was not the same for all the soldiers: on October 15, most of the other officers were evacuated from Moscow, while the study of their "cases" continued.

At this moment, the Germans reached the suburbs of the capital. Panic swept and looting broke out in several neighborhoods. Stalin moved all government departments to Kouibychev, formerly Samara. He made the parents of his late wife Nadezhda leave. A special train was waiting for him at a secret junction, leaving for Kouibychev; there, a large underground shelter would protect him from bombs. On October 7, he had appointed Zhukov commander of the western front, in charge of defending Moscow. The latter brought in four hundred thousand men from Siberia and the Far East and deployed them in front of the capital. Stalin had received assurances from Sorge that the Japanese were busy elsewhere, preparing to attack the United States in the Pacific; this information was correct, because on December 7, 1941, they did indeed attack Pearl Harbor. Thanks to Siberian reinforcements and the early arrival of a particularly harsh winter for which the Germans were not prepared, the German offensive

Despite the panic that devoured Moscow, Stalin continued to deal with the "conspirators". On October 18, he ordered the suspension of investigations and the immediate execution of twenty-five of the most important officers arrested, despite being under interrogation. On the 28th, Maria Nesterenko was being interrogated at the Kuibyshev NKVD when Beria's assistant, Rodos, entered the room and said: "We are leaving! Shortly after, five trucks left the prison in the direction of a special site, near the small village of Barbysh; Twenty officers were executed. Five were missing, mistakenly sent to Saratov; they were executed on the spot. At the same time, at Orel, the wives and children of Kork, Gamarnik, Uborevich and other generals shot nearly four years earlier with Tukhachevsky were executed.

All these executions were, in Stalin's mind, linked to Tukhachevsky's plot and the Okhrana dossier. With one exception: Filip Golochtchekine was executed because he was linked to Roman Malinovsky.

Generals GM Shtern and YV Smoushkevitch were executed at Kouibychev, because they had commanded the fights against the Japanese, in 1938, linked for Stalin to the defection of Genrikh Lioushkov and to the "intoxication" of the "Eremin letter". Despite the military situation, the Okhrana file did not leave Stalin's mind: in that same month of October 1941, he instructed Beria to promise life to Alexander

Svanidje, the brother of his first wife, if he confessed to having fabricated the Okhrana documents to discredit Stalin. "Why would I apologize? replied Svanidje. I have not committed any crime. He was executed.

See how proud he was! cried Stalin. He died without asking for forgiveness! »

Svanidje had indeed fabricated fake Okhrana documents, including the fake "Eremin letter", in the secret Kremlin printing press, but these were the ones Stalin had asked him to glorify his revolutionary past and discredit the real documents. Still in October 1941, in Shanghai, Golovachev, to whom Lioushkov had entrusted the "Eremin letter", decided to sell it to the German Embassy; he thought, indeed, that the Soviet regime was nearing its end. On November 26, the German Embassy wired the proposed purchase of the document to Berlin. Berlin asked for additional information: where did this letter come from? The embassy in Shanghai explained that she had been "hidden with tsarist policemen" who had only brought her out in 1934/38 .

Hilger participated in the negotiations as a specialist in Soviet affairs; he reported that the Germans did not follow up on Golovachev's offer, because the document would have had to be submitted to expertise that was then impossible. Stalin was undoubtedly informed by his spies of the failure of the sale of this fake.

In November, Zhukov repelled the German assault. General Heinz Guderian, panzer commander, wrote in his diary:

"The offensive on Moscow has come to an end. All the sacrifices and efforts of our brilliant forces have failed. We have suffered a serious defeat. »

But the decisive battle took place near Stalingrad, the former Tsarytsin Volgograd, where the Soviet army was commanded by General Rodion Malinovsky. When this name was mentioned in Stalin's office, he became alarmed and asked Khrushchev several times: Who is this Malinovsky? »

Khrushchev did not know what to answer. "When you return to the front, Stalin advised him, you had better keep an eye on him. Not knowing then what echo Malinovsky's name awoke in Stalin's mind, he was intrigued by this order; he wrote in his memoirs:

"Back at the front, I followed every move of Malinovsky from hour to hour. I watched him even when he went to bed, to check that he closed his eyes.

And he added that the exigencies of war perhaps compelled Stalin to rein in his anger and his suspicions [41](#).

NOTES

[1](#). **Documents on German Foreign Policy, op. cit.**, series D, vol. XII, p. 126.

[2](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 426.

[3](#). John Erickson, **The Soviet High Command**, London, 1955, p. 577.

See also Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 427.

[4](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 427, citing a Soviet source, G. Deborine, in **Survey**, April 1967, p. 443.

[5](#). Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 327 **sq.** "No act of the Russians between 1939 and 1941 did not irritate Hitler so much as the treaty with Yugoslavia, which contributed to the final rupture, and Stalin must have felt it. One of the authors, Hilger, had been Ambassador Schulenburg's adviser in Moscow.

[6](#). Winston Churchill, **The Second World War**, London, 1948, vol. II, p. 511. See also Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 429, citing **Documents on German Foreign Policy, op. cit.**, series D, vol. XII, p. 537.

[7](#). **Documents on German Foreign Policy, op. cit.**, series D, vol. XII, p. 870.

[8](#). Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 329.

[9](#). Sontag and Beddie, **op. cit.**, p. 345.

[10](#). Hilger and Meyer, **op. cit.**, p. 336.

[11](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 435, citing Khrushchev's secret speech, "Special Report to the XX Party Congress".

[12](#). Arkady Vaksberg, "Taina Ochiabrya, 1941-go", **Literaturnaya gazeta**, 1948, taken up by **Mir**, n° 165, May 5-11, 1988.

[13](#). **Ibid.**

[14](#). Khrushchev's secret speech.

[15](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 438 **sq.**

[16](#). Albert Speer, **Inside the Third Reich**, New York, 1970, p. 306.

- [17.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 310.
- [18.](#) IP Itskov, recorded interview with the author.
- [19.](#) Sir Ernest Llewellyn Woodward, **British Foreign Policy in the Second World War**, London, 1962, p. 152 **sq.**
- [20.](#) Robert E. Sherwood, **The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins**, 1949, vol. I, p. 343-345.
- [21.](#) AN Kolesnik, "Voennoplenyi starshii leitant Yakov Djougashvili", **Military-historicheskii journal**, Moscow, December 1988.
- [22.](#) Speer, **op. cit.**, p. 306.
- [23.](#) Kolesnik, **op. cit.**
- [24.](#) **The New York Times**, February 19, 1968, p. 7.
- [25.](#) Svetlana Alliloueva, **Dvadsat'pisem k drougou**, New York, 1967, p. 151 **sq.** See also Yakov A. Sukhotin, "Iosif Vissarionovich bolshoe gnezdo", **Novoe Rousskoie Slovo**, April 8-9, 1996.
- [26.](#) Memories of Nadine Brackman, the present wife of the author, who was a classmate of Goulia, from the sixth to the third; she remembers that Yulia and Goulia lived in the secret police building on Bolshoi Komsomolski Avenue, not far from Lubyanka. Goulia went to school 644, on Armianski Avenue, not far from there; in the morning, a maid accompanied Goulia to school and carried her books and notebooks, and in the evening, accompanied her home. Goulia was a loner, speaking little to her classmates and spending her recreation time alone near a window.
- [27.](#) Beatrice Farnsworth, **William C. Bullitt and the Soviet Union**, 1967, p. 3 and 167.
- [28.](#) Churchill, **op. cit.**, p. 405 and 411.
- [29.](#) Sherwood, **op. cit.**, vol. I, p. 392.
- [30.](#) See chapters 35 and 36.
- [31.](#) Vaksberg, **op. cit.**
- [32.](#) **Ibid.**
- [33.](#) **Ibid.**
- [34.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 459 **sq.**
- [35.](#) Vaksberg, **op. cit.**
- [36.](#) VA Chalikova, "Arkhivnyi younosha", **Neva**, October 1988, p. 153.

37. Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 311. See also Khrushchev's Secret Speech.

38. The letter addressed to Isaac Don Levine, reporting these information and known as the letter J, is in the Levine archives, and a copy is in the author's archives; it comes from a high official of the Department of State, who signed J; it quotes two confidential cables of November 26, 1941 and January 5, 1942 sent by the German diplomatic mission in Shanghai to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Berlin. These cables were discovered in folder AA/18 of the Alexandria Repository, a repository of Third Reich documents captured during World War II.

39. **Ibid.**

40. Earl of Avon [Anthony Eden], **The Reckoning**, London, 1960-1965, p. 206.

41 Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 203-205.

The American **Lend and Lease Bill** provided that in exchange for material aid, in the form of funds or military equipment, the recipient state granted territorial benefits. (NdT)

35

The generalissimo with the crippled arm

The paradox wanted that the war years were, from the point of view psychological, the least abnormal of Stalin's reign. For once, the country was fighting against real enemies of the people and no longer against fantasies from their imagination. The specter of defeat compelled Stalin to call for help from even his most hated enemies, including the Poles; he thus authorized the formation of a Polish army on Soviet territory. At the end of July 1941, General Wladislaw Sikorski, head of the Polish government in exile, and Ivan Maiski, USSR ambassador in London, signed an agreement according to which all Polish citizens and prisoners of war would be released from Soviet camps and prisons, and allowed to join the Polish army. The question of Poland's borders was left open, but it was accepted that all German-Soviet treaties of 1939 had lapsed. We did not know then of the existence of the secret protocols on the sharing of the Polo

In October 1941, as German troops threatened Moscow, Beria summoned Polish General Zigmunt Berling, one of the few officers released from prison following the Soviet-Polish agreement, to discuss plans for organizing the Polish army. Berling declared that, according to his information, there were many Polish officers in the three camps of Kozelsk, Starobelsk and Ostashkovo, and that they would be enough to provide cadres for the Polish army. Beria's assistant, VN Merkulov, then blurted out an alarming thought: "No, not those. We made a big mistake about them. — »

On November 14, the ambassador of the Polish government in exile, Stanislav Kot, received by Stalin, asked him to ensure that all Polish officers and citizens were released. "How, there are Poles who have not been released?" Stalin asked, feigning surprise, knowing that the fifteen thousand or so Polish officers had been executed. "We have names and lists," Kot replied.

"So are there any exact lists? Stalin asked again. Kot replied that the names of all the officers were known to the Polish government.

in exile. Stalin again feigned disbelief. He picked up the phone: "The NKVD? This is Stalin. Have all the Poles been released from prison?" He waited a few seconds, as if listening to an answer, and continued: "Because I have here I ambassador from Poland who tells me that they have not all been released." Then, after pretending to listen to an answer for a few seconds, he hung up and muttered to Kot, as if confused: "They say that they have all been released. — »

Two weeks later, during a new interview with Stalin, Kot, General Sikorski and General Wladislaw Anders, leader of the Polish forces on Soviet territory, once again demanded the release of the fifteen thousand Polish officers, who were not were not in German POW camps and who had not returned to Poland. And once again, Stalin played the surprise. "It's impossible, he declared, they will have fled. — Where?" asked Anders. not all of them have fled," Anders protested. "They won't have arrived yet," Stalin insisted. "Understand that the Soviet government has no reason to detain a single Pole.

»

Stalin used to say, about the people he sent to their death: "It's not worth talking about them, because they are all **odnim mirom mazamy**" ("passed to the same tar brush"). The silence of the mass graves seemed to assure him that his victims had been forgotten. But these graves began to haunt him when the Germans discovered mass graves in the territories previously under Soviet occupation. Hitler at first attached no importance to them, but those in the Katyn Forest, near Smolensk, caught his attention, because they contained the remains of Polish officers.

The discovery had been made by chance in July 1941 These had found documents on the execution of Polish officers. An old peasant, Parfen Kiselev, and a village blacksmith, Ivan Krovosertsov, led the Germans to the mass graves. The exhumations only started one

year later, and on April 13, 1943, Berlin radio broadcast the first news of the discovery of the remains of thousands of Polish officers shot by the NKVD. Two days later, Radio Moscow accused the Germans of having committed the massacre themselves.

Germany invited representatives of several countries and the Red Cross to investigate the case. The Red Cross identified the victims thanks to the effects found on them, identity papers, newspapers and uniforms. It turned out that they were the officers of the Kozelsk camp, executed in the spring of 1940, so a year before the German occupation. General Sikorski communicated the Red Cross report to Winston Churchill, who decided not to publish it, on the pretext that these officers could not be brought back to life⁵. Nevertheless, the Polish government persisted in demanding accountability for the Katyn massacre and the fate of the officers in the Starobelsk and Ostashkovo camps. Stalin then severed his relations with him and he created a puppet government in the Polish territories under Soviet occupation. Shortly after, General Sikorski died in a suspicious plane crash.

When the Red Army reoccupied the Katyn region in January 1944, a convoy of trucks came to collect the remains of nine hundred and twenty-five Polish officers to bring them back to the Moscow Forensic Institute; there, NKVD personnel manipulated these remains by stuffing them with "material evidence", such as fragments of newspapers and fake diaries, intended to prove that the massacre had taken place after the German occupation of the area. After the war, Stalin attempted to include the Katyn massacre among the Nazi war crimes tried at Nuremberg, but in July 1946 the English and American judges decided not to include Katyn in the trial. However, they also ignored the Red Cross report, which would have led to the indictment of Stalin as a war criminal as well.

The master of Moscow had a small monument erected in Katyn, bearing the following inscription: "Here lay prisoners, officers of the Polish Army, who perished in atrocious torments at the hands of the Fa —
»

At the Tehran conference, which began on November 27, 1943, Stalin harbored the hope of involving the Allies in a massacre comparable to that of Katyn; he suddenly suggested to Roosevelt and Churchill that they execute fifty thousand German soldiers at the end of the war. "Parliament and the British people will never agree to mass executions. Let the Soviets have no illusions about that," Churchill replied. Stalin insisted: "Fifty thousand must be shot. The General Staff must be annihilated.

Churchill football outraged; he then knew from the Red Cross that the Katyn massacre had been committed by Stalin's secret police. "I'd rather come out right here in the garden and shoot myself in the head than sully my honor and that of my country with such infamy. »

Roosevelt intervened in a joking tone: "I have a compromise to propose: that we shoot not fifty thousand, but forty-nine thousand." His son Elliott, who was present at the interview, declared himself entirely in agreement with Marshal Stalin's plan and assured that the American army would agree. Churchill, exasperated, left the table, stating that he was "offended by this intrusion". Stalin followed him and declared that it had all been "a joke".

—

In Tehran, Roosevelt was eager to establish a relationship personal with Stalin. To please him, he made derogatory comments about Churchill, until Stalin laughed. "The ice was broken, Roosevelt said, and we talked like men and brothers."

— Viscount Alanbrooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, noted in his diary: "This conference ended before it began. Stalin put the president in his pocket. Alanbrooke realized that Stalin had definite plans for how the Allies would dispose of the Balkans and he intended to include Turkey and the whole of the eastern Mediterranean in the Soviet sphere of influence⁹; but he did not know then that Stalin had tried to achieve the same results with Hitler and that it was the terms of the agreement that had caused the fracture between the two tyrants.

Already annoyed by Roosevelt's courtship of Stalin, Churchill saw in a possible Roosevelt-Stalin alliance a threat to British interests; he was alarmed when Stalin invited Roosevelt to move into the USSR embassy on the pretext that Soviet counterintelligence

had uncovered a German plan to kidnap Roosevelt and assassinate Churchill and Stalin. Roosevelt, however, accepted Stalin's invitation and they had a talk for an hour. Roosevelt declared that he was in favor of self-determination for the countries of the British Empire and recalled with pride that his country had granted independence to the Philippines. He warned his interlocutor not to raise the question of Indian independence, as if Stalin and he had already agreed on this and that Churchill was their common adversary. At the end, Stalin presented himself as a sincere herald of the independence of the peoples and said that India was certainly a painful problem for Churchill. Roosevelt declared that change in India should be "from below", which Stalin interpreted as "by revolution".

Stalin in Tehran had faith in victory; the Germans had suffered a crushing defeat at Stalingrad and had been driven out of the Caucasus, which had reopened the Allied supply route to the USSR through Iran. On March 6, 1943, he had awarded himself the title of "Marshal of the Soviet Union" and had himself proclaimed "the greatest strategist of all time and of all countries".

On June 20, 1944, a group of German officers attempted to assassinate Hitler to end a visibly lost war; they were executed. Reviled by German propaganda in terms worthy of Vishinski¹¹, the attack reminded Hitler of Stalin's massive purges of his own army, and he regretted not having followed his example; he even suspected a conspiracy between the German and Soviet staffs. It was, he concluded, thanks to the execution of Tukhachevsky that Stalin had been able to achieve his military successes. The episode seemed crucial to him. "The days of betrayal are over, he proclaimed, better and new generals will take command." »

At the end of July 1944, the Red Army arrived on the Vistula; Warsaw was within reach. But Stalin ordered General KK Rokossovski not to cross the river without his permission. He knew, in fact, from his counterintelligence, that the Polish resistance was preparing for an insurrection against the Germans. The insurrection began on August 1, 1944. The Germans were determined to crush it. They razed entire districts of Warsaw. Churchill, Roosevelt and the leader of the Polish government in exile,

Stanislas Mikolajczyk, urged Stalin to intervene. "Things being what they are," Stalin cabled back, "on August 16, the Soviet HQs have decided to stay away from the Warsaw adventure, since they cannot take direct responsibility for it. or indirect. On the 20th, Churchill and Roosevelt sent him an urgent message:

"We expect you to immediately parachute in supplies and weapons to the Polish patriots in Warsaw, or that you will allow our planes to do so very quickly. The time element is of extreme importance¹³.

»

Too happy to see the Poles massacred by the Germans, Stalin temporized and the Red Army did not enter Warsaw until January 17, 1945, three months after the surrender of General Bor-Komorowski. Fifteen thousand combatants were dead, two hundred and fifty thousand inhabitants had perished under the rubble of their city: "The Russians found only destroyed streets and unburied dead", Churchill noted bitterly.

Churchill was well aware of Roosevelt's desire to free the countries of the Empire; he decided to play Stalin against him. — He arrived in Moscow on the 6th October 1944, with its Minister of Foreign Affairs, Anthony Eden. Roosevelt could not join him, absorbed in the presidential campaign - despite his failing health, he intended to run for a fourth term. "Let's settle our affairs in the Balkans," Churchill declared to Stalin at the first interview. He offered the latter domination over 90% of Romania, taking as much for the English in Greece, and offering 50% of Yugoslavia to the USSR. And while Stalin listened to the translation of the offer, Churchill continued, writing on a sheet "50% from Hungary and 75% from Bulgaria for the USSR", and he pushed the sheet towards Stalin. He took a blue pencil and signed the proposal. Scrupulous, Churchill wondered if it would not appear cynical to dispose of millions of people in this way and suggested burning the document.

"No, keep it," replied Stalin. —

The question of Poland's future proved difficult. Churchill was unaware the secret protocol of the German-Soviet pact on the division of the country; he granted Stalin hegemony over an unspecified part of Poland, in exchange for Stalin's promise to support the continued presence

British in Hong Kong and the Middle East. These negotiations were not brought to light until thirty years later, when the British archives were opened, but the "political conversations" between the two heads of state, on the other hand, were less revealing; the documents were messy and incomplete; those in charge of the archives declared themselves unable to explain the "disappearance" of certain pieces. —

The "Eastern question" and the fate of Poland were discussed again at the Yalta conference, which opened on February 5, 1945. Stalin declared that he had no intention of returning the conquered Polish territories in September 1939, but that Poland would receive in compensation German Silesia, rich in minerals. Churchill objected that Poland could not absorb the large German populations of that province, to which Stalin replied: "When our troops enter there, the Germans will flee. He then demanded in compensation the greater part of East Prussia, together with Königsberg. He promised to declare war on Japan within three months of Germany's defeat, in exchange for territorial concessions: the Kuril Islands, southern Sakhalin Island, which allowed access to the port of Dairen, and the establishment of a Soviet naval base at Port Arthur, as well as the joint Sino-Soviet administration of the Manchurian Railways. Roosevelt undertook to obtain General Chiang Kai-shek's agreement on these points. Eden called these secret protocols "dishonorable by-products of the conference." —

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When Roosevelt died on April 12, 1945, Stalin sent a letter of condolence to his successor, Harry S. Truman, calling the deceased a 'statesman of international stature' and a 'champion of peace and security'. 'in the post-war period¹⁹'. He then sent a message to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, asking him to allow the Soviets to enter Berlin first, "in view of the agreement concluded with Roosevelt and the bloodshed by our people." Eisenhower therefore delayed his entry into the city. Poland. —

On April 21, 1945, the Soviet armies, commanded by Generals Joukov, Koniev and Rokossovski, stormed the capital, after violent bombardments and street battles. Most of the city was on fire. On April 30, Hitler and his mistress Eva Braun committed suicide; the next day, German General Hans Krebs announced their deaths to Soviet HQ and the offer of the new German government to open surrender talks. Zhukov telephoned Stalin, who exclaimed, "Too bad we didn't catch him alive. Where is the corpse?"

Zhukov replied that he had been burned. The Soviets discovered in the courtyard of the chancellery a shallow grave containing two charred corpses rolled up in carpets. Hitler's dentist confirmed that the jawbone and dental formula matched.

On May 8, Deputy Foreign Minister Vishinski visited in Berlin with instructions from Stalin to Zhukov: suppress all information about Hitler's death. During a press conference, Zhukov therefore radically changed his version of the facts:

"The circumstances are mysterious, he declared. We have not identified Hitler's body. I know nothing of his fate. He may have fled Berlin at the last minute."

It was not until twenty years later, well after Stalin's death, that Zhukov first publicly admitted that "Hitler and Goebbels, seeing no other way out, had ended their lives by suicide."

Stalin himself kept telling that Hitler was hiding somewhere, that he had left in a big submarine for Japan or - occasional variation - for South America. The mechanism of these concealments was that of the "false target", familiar to Stalin, and the reason, the intention to make it sound that the Western powers protected Hitler, while the USSR remained the greatest hope of humanity and a bastion of peace and democracy. During the Victory Parade on May 9 in Moscow, he awarded himself the title of "Generalissimo", with the Order of Victory and the medal of Hero of the Nation.

At the Potsdam conference, which was to open on July 15, 1945, Truman, Churchill and Stalin planned to settle outstanding issues. The date was delayed due to Stalin's mild heart attack. As always, he refused to fly and an eleven-car convoy

brought them to their destination by rail, he, his entourage and a large security escort. The convoy consisted of four luxury wagons which had belonged to the Tsar and which had been taken from a museum. Stalin decided to go through Lithuania and East Prussia, considering Poland dangerous. Visiting Truman, he begged him to forgive him for being one day late, alleging that his doctors would not allow him to fly due to "a slight weakness in the lungs". Truman invited him to lunch, but no doubt fearing being poisoned, Stalin said he could not. "You can if you want to," Truman says. Seized by the direct tone of the American, Stalin accepted. During lunch, he surprised his host by assuring that Hitler was still alive, in Spain or Argentina. However, the day before, Truman and Churchill had visited the Chancellery in Berlin, and Soviet soldiers had shown them the place where the corpses of Hitler and Eva Braun had been found. Truman could not believe his ears when Stalin claimed that a serious search of the premises had failed to find any trace of Hitler or evidence of his death.

The day before, Truman had received a report of the successful testing of the experimental atomic explosion at Alamogordo, New Mexico; he informed Churchill of this and observed that the entry into the war of the USSR against Japan was decidedly of no greater importance. Churchill in turn noted that this was a quick way to end the war and many other things. Both agreed to warn Stalin.

He didn't seem moved by it and said, "That's good. I hope you'll put it to good use against the Japanese." His spy services had, in fact, kept him informed of the development of the bomb; understanding that the success of Alamogordo put his interlocutors in a position of superiority, he therefore wanted to minimize the importance of this weapon in order to extract concessions from them. And he had drawn up a whole list of them, mostly concerning the "Eastern question". He wanted to absorb Iran or at least the north of this country, with Azerbaijan, into the Soviet Union; he also wanted Libya to be included in the Soviet sphere of influence and demanded the right to participate in the international administration of Tangier. His most pressing demands were for the establishment of a naval base in the Bosphorus. Truman and Churchill rejected all these requests. Unlike Roosevelt, Truman respected Churchill and did not seek to

seduce Stalin. It seems that an iron curtain has fallen, he declared to about Eastern Europe. "Fairy tales!" ', replied Stalin.

Labor's electoral victory during the conference resulted in Clement Attlee succeeding Churchill as Prime Minister, but it did not bring any advantage to Stalin, since Truman, from then on, assumed sole responsibility for the defense of the West.

On August 1, at the close of the conference, a news camera recorded strange images: in his generalissimo's uniform, Stalin was advancing rapidly towards a chair. A witness said:

"His left arm, shorter, was seized with spasms and it hung inert from his shoulder, as if a mechanism had suddenly broken. Then, the arm, which seemed to no longer have any connection with the body, slowly moved back into place²⁹. »

Less than a week later, on August 6, the first A-bomb fell on Hiroshima. Svetlana had just arrived at her father's dacha in Kuntsevo with her three-month-old son, Iosif. The entire Politburo was present, but no one paid attention to her; the news of Hiroshima polarized the spirits. Stalin realized that the surrender of Japan was imminent and that he should quickly enter the lists to participate in the partition of the territories; he therefore declared war on August 8 and the Soviet troops crossed the Manchu border.

It was then that the defector Lyushkov, former head of the NKVD in the Far East, asked to be evacuated to Tokyo. He was in Port Arthur, Manchuria. General Takeoka tried for two hours to persuade him to commit suicide. Lyushkov refused. Claiming to take him to the boat that would evacuate him, Takeoka later recounted that he killed him with a bullet to the chest and had his body cremated; the urn was placed in the Buddhist temple under the name of a Japanese officer. She is there —, Dairen³⁰ always.

Lyushkov dead, Stalin was the only one who knew the truth about the pseudo "Eremin letter".

Soviet physicist IV Kurchatov began working on atomic fission in 1943. Subsequently, Beria received from his spies Klaus Fuchs, Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, as well as from an as yet unidentified fourth known by the pseudonym of "Perseus", a mass of information on the American bomb. On January 25, 1945, so several months before the Potsdam conference, during a conference with Beria, Molotov and Kurchatov, Stalin asked the latter to make the bomb as soon as possible. He inquired about the quantities of plutonium available because he wanted to have two bombs, to keep one in reserve.

Churchill was the first to sound the alarm over Stalin's plans. In a speech at American College, Fulton, Missouri, he exclaimed: "From Stettin, on the Baltic, to Trieste, on the Adriatic, an iron curtain fell on the mainland. Behind this line are all the capitals of Central and Eastern Europe, Warsaw, Berlin, Prague, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Bucharest and Sofia³²..."

Stalin's irritated reply was published by **Pravda** on March 13; he compared Churchill to Hitler and called him a perpetrator of World War III.

— He invited a delegation of British Labor members, including MP Alice Bacon, a leftist in the House of Commons; she found Stalin "very human, with a keen sense of humor and an alert spirit³⁴". Others were of a different opinion. Lord Montgomery found him well aged since the Potsdam conference. But when Labor suspended its aid program to Greece, Stalin fomented a civil war there. He wanted to absorb Greece into the Soviet bloc and tried to force Turkey to grant him a military base in the Bosphorus. Its ambitions were defeated by Truman who, on March 12, 1947, proclaimed the determination of the United States to support by armed groups or external pressure free peoples resisting efforts at enslavement; it was the "Truman³⁶ doctrine". Three months later, Stalin rejected the Marshall Plan intended to set in motion the economic reconstruction of countries ravaged by war. Thus began the Cold War.

But Stalin's health was declining; he suffered from high blood pressure and episodic heart trouble. In January 1948, Milovan Djilas, member

of the Yugoslav Politburo, was invited to the Kuntsevo dacha, where the guard had been considerably reinforced, with a security zone and corridors of barbed wire through which dog handlers passed. Djilas was surprised to find Stalin so aged. At the end of the dinner, he gave a disconcerting toast to "Vladimir Ilyich **[Lenin]**, our leader, our teacher, our everything! "He then asked Djilas if there were many Jews in his Politburo and suddenly began to invective him: "You are an anti-Semite! An anti-Semite! "He then put a record on the gramophone and attempted to perform a Caucasian **lizginka** , but had to give it up, acknowledging, "I've grown old, I'm already an old man!", while the rest of the diners protested. As the guests left, he put on another record, a recording of barking or wolf calls, and burst out laughing. Djilas, taken aback, did not know that for Stalin, wolves symbolized the Jews. Stalin was preparing, in fact, mass deportations of Jews.

NOTES

1. A. Antonov-Ovseenko, "Katyn", **Novoie rousskoie slovo**, 27 May 1988, p. 20.

2. Stanislav Kot, **Conversations with the Kremlin and Dispatches from Russia**, London, 1963, p. 106.

3. **Ibid.**, p. 140.

4. Chalikova, "Arkhipnyi younosha", **Neva**, October 1988, p. 153.

5. Nikolas Betell, "Katyn 1940", **Kontinent**, No. 11, 1977.

6. Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**

7. Lord Moran, **Winston Churchill: The Struggle for Survival, 1940-1965**, London, 1966, p. 141 **sq.**

8. Frances Perkins, **The Roosevelt I Knew**, London, 1974, p. 70 **sq.**

9. Moran, **op. cit.**, p. 133-135.

10. Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 491-493. See also Sherwood, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 771 **sq.**, as well as the official Soviet publication of the transcript in **International Affairs**, Moscow, Nos. 7 and 8, July and August 1961, as well as Churchill, **op. cit.**, vol. V, p. 303, and Sherwood, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 303.

11. Speer, **op. cit.**, p. 390.

12. **Ibid.**, p. 390 **sq.**

[13.](#) Churchill, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 118-120.

[14.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 128.

[15.](#) Sir Winston Churchill's war records have been made public in August 1973; they reveal that his apprehension of American hostility to British colonial interests was the reason he used Stalin for the deal that sealed Poland's fate. **see** "Churchill, Stalin made Polish deal", **New York Times**, August 5, 1973.

[16.](#) Churchill, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 198.

[17.](#) Churchill, Stalin made Polish deal, **op. cit.**

[18.](#) Earl of Avon, **op. cit.**, p. 513.

[19.](#) IV Stalin, **Stalin's Correspondence with Churchill, Attlee, Roosevelt and Truman**, 1941-1945, Moscow and London, 1957-1958, vol. II, p. 214.

[20.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 331.

[21.](#) GK Joukov, **Vospominaniya i razmishleniya**, Moscow, 1974, p. 631 sq.

[22.](#) Erich Kuby, **The Russians and Berlin, 1945**, London, 1968, p. 175.

[23.](#) Churchill, **op. cit.**, vol. II, p. 903.

[24.](#) GK Joukov, "Bitva za Berlin", **Military-istoricheskii journal**, June 1965.

[25.](#) James MacGregor Burns, **Roosevelt: The Soldier of Freedom**, 1940-1945, London, 1971, p. 68.

[26.](#) Churchill, **op. cit.**, vol. VII, p. 552.

[27.](#) James F. Byrnes, **Speaking Frankly**, New York and London, 1967, p. 263.

[28.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 76.

[29.](#) Robert Payne, **The Rise and Fall of Stalin**, New York, 1965, London, 1966, p. 624.

[30.](#) V. Mikhailiv and V. Bondarenko, "Jizn'i smert'komissara Lyouoshkova", **Kurier**, 3 June 1993. See also Coox, **op. cit.**, p. 418, and Antono-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 208 sq.

[31.](#) Serge Schmemann, article in: **New York Times**, January 14, 1983, p. 14.

[32.](#) **The Times**, London, March 6, 1946.

[33.](#) **Pravda**, March 13, 1946.

[34.](#) **Daily Herald**, London, August 13, 1946.

[35.](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 555, citing Lord Montgomery, **Memoirs**, London, 1958, p. 445.

[36.](#) Harry Truman, **Years of Trial and Hope**, 1946-1953, London, 1966, p. 111.

[37.](#) Milovan Djilas, **Conversations with Stalin**, New York and London, 1952, p. 157-161.

36

Assassins in white coats

At the end of November 1947, Solomon Mikhoels, director of the Jewish Theater of Moscow and chairman of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee (CJAF), addressed a mainly Jewish audience in the hall of the Moscow Polytechnic Museum. He announced that Andrei Gromyko, the USSR's representative to the United Nations, had declared Soviet support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, thus paving the way for a land of Israel. The applause was deafening. When the episode was reported to Stalin, he ordered the arrest of the direct or indirect relations of Mikhoels¹.

Thus, the economist Goldshtein was apprehended on December 19, 1947, and the literary critic ZG Grinberg on the 28th. At the same time, several relatives of Stalin himself were arrested, including Anna Redens, sister of Nadezhda Alliloueva, Stalin's suicide wife, whose husband had been executed in 1938, and Olga Alliloueva, widow of Nadezhda's brother, Pavel, who died suddenly the same year. Olga had remarried and her second husband, a Jew, was arrested along with her. Stalin explained this to his daughter, Svetlana: "They knew too much. They talked too much. They played into our enemies' hands." However, he did not reveal to her that Olga was accused of poisoning her first husband. Stalin suspected Pavel Alliluev and Stanislav Redens of knowing about his past in the Okhrana, the discovery of his file and its connection to the execution of Tukhachevsky and others

generals. He also suspected the two men of confiding their secrets to their wives, who may themselves have confided them to their Jewish friends. Among those arrested were Olga's neighbors Lev Tumerman and his wife Lydia Shatunovskaya, who were also friends of Mikhoels. Anna, Olga and their neighbors were therefore accused of having participated in the "anti-Soviet conspiracy" of Mikhoels. After January 13, 1948, the transcript of their interrogations was rewritten and Mikhoels' name was removed. A few months later, the defendants were condemned by the special counsel of the MGB¹ to various terms of imprisonment in the Vladimir Central prison³.

On January 10, 1948, the Minister of State Security, VS Abakumov, gave Stalin the signed depositions of Goldshtein and Grinberg, "confessing" that Mikhoëls was an "American and Zionist agent". Stalin summoned the Politburo and, in a voice strangled with rage, declared that Mikhoëls should be "hit on the head with an ice ax wrapped in a wet **telogreika** (lined jacket), and run over by a truck." Members of the – Politburo were troubled by Stalin's rage and bizarre instructions, which they dared not discuss. They did not know that two of the murders ordered by Stalin several years before had merged into one in his mind: that of his father Vissarion by Kamo in 1906, using an ice ax wrapped in a wet lined jacket, and that of Kamo himself in 1922, run over by a truck. Immediately after the meeting, Stalin summoned Abakumov and ordered him to liquidate Mikhoëls.

A few days after Stalin's death, Beria sent a report to the Presidium of the Central Committee, dated April 2, 1953. According to Abakumov, arrested in the meantime, he declared:

"I remember that the head of the Soviet government, IV Stalin, gave me the urgent order to organize the liquidation of Mikhoëls through special officials of the MGB of the USSR6. – »

Abakumov named the latter: Ogoltsov, Shubnikov and the Minister of State Security of Belarus, Lavrenty Tsanava, Beria's own nephew. And Stalin had specified that the murder had to look like an accident.

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Passing through Minsk, Mikhoëls was invited by an agent of Tsanava to a marriage, on the evening of January 13, 1948. With his companion, the literary critic V. Golubov-Potapov, himself an MGB agent, he was taken to the dacha of Tsanava, near Minsk. When they arrived at 10 p.m., they were pulled from the car and shot. Their bodies were crushed by a truck, then dumped in an adjacent deserted street, where passers-by discovered them the next day.

Svetlana went to her father the night of the murder. As she entered the room, the phone rang; Stalin picked up the phone, listened quietly and said: Well, it's a traffic accident. Then he hung up and greeted his daughter. A few minutes later, he told her that Mikhoëls had

was killed in a car accident. She understood that the communication was about the report of a murder disguised as a car accident on the orders of her father. "I was well aware of his obsession with 'Zionist' plots, he saw them everywhere", she declared⁸.

The coffin containing the corpse of Mikhoels was placed on the stage of the Jewish Theater in Moscow. Despite the make-up, the deep wounds caused by the woodpecker were clearly visible. The theater was not big enough and the crowd gathered outside. The victim was solemnly buried, but rumors of assassination by the MGB spread nonetheless.

The Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, of which he had long been president, was already the subject of an investigation by the MGB, which accused some of its members of "Jewish bourgeois nationalism" and of complicity in an "anti-Soviet conspiracy" led by Mikhoels.

The CJAF had however been founded on Stalin's orders in August 1941, in when the Germans were advancing into Soviet territory. Stalin hoped through him to mobilize Jewish support around the world, because he attributed great political and financial power to the Jews. August 24, SA Lozovski, deputy foreign minister and head of the Soviet Information Bureau, had received formal orders from Stalin to Initially, he thought of

making it a foundation¹⁰ organization. international. He thus ordered Beria to release Henrik Erlich and Victor Alter, two famous Jewish Social Democratic leaders in Poland. Arrested as "spies" in September 1939, in the part of the country under Soviet occupation, they expected to be executed. Their convictions were suddenly overturned and they were released from prison on September 24, 1941, to call on Polish Jews to enlist in the Polish army on Soviet soil.

Erlich and Alter met Ambassador Kot, who was then trying to clarify the fate of the fifteen thousand missing officers, held in three camps; there were many Jews in their ranks. Evacuated from Moscow to Kouibychev, they were installed in a hotel in that city; there they discussed the fate of the fifteen thousand officers. Their rooms were lined with microphones and their conversations were reported to Stalin.

Arrested again, as "German spies" this time, they were executed. Stalin,

then renounced to make it an international organization, appointed Mikhoëls president of the CJAF. Mikhoëls worked hard to mobilize Jewish communities in favor of the USSR in many countries¹¹ and met with a particularly warm welcome in Palestine; the Jewish community of this country sent funds and medicines. As a result of this generosity, Stalin began to take an interest in Palestine. He sent agents there to study the possibility of using the Jews to serve his strategic aims in the Middle East. These agents were struck by the strongly left-wing, pro-Soviet sentiments of the Jewish community in Palestine at that time, as well as the "socialist character" of its economy.

Towards the end of the war, Stalin therefore decided to support the creation of a Jewish state, hoping to make it an anti-Western Soviet platform. After the war, he closely followed the struggle of the Jews of Palestine against the British, who opposed the immigration to Palestine of Jews from the DP camps in Europe.

In early 1946, Stalin ordered his secret service to take advantage of the Israeli-British conflict to attract the young State of Israel into the Soviet sphere of influence. The head of the Soviet secret service in London, Viktor Kukin, then informed Mordechai Oren, one of the leaders of the left-wing Mapam party, which aimed to make Israel a socialist state, that he would enjoy Soviet support if he followed a pro-Soviet policy.

"We will help you," he promised her.

At the beginning of 1943, Mikhoëls had traveled to the United States in company of the poet IS Fefer, an agent of the MGB, to raise funds for the Soviet war effort. He met in New York Chaïm Weizmann, future president of Israel; the latter reported in his diary that, when they found themselves alone, he asked Mikhoëls in Yiddish: "What is the situation of the Jews in the USSR? The other looked around him with an alarmed look, raised his hands to heaven and whispered: "**Gewalt!**" ("Enslaved¹⁵!")

Shortly after Mikhoëls' death, Stalin also ordered the poisoning of CJAF secretary Shakno Epshtein. An agent claiming to represent the Central Committee spoke with Epshtein for a few minutes behind closed doors; when he opened the door again, the visitor announced that Epshtein had died of a heart attack.

CJAF members were arrested one after another and accused of wanting

turn Crimea into "an American-Zionist base for an attack on the Soviet Union¹⁷". The accusation stemmed from an idea of Stalin himself, since it was he who, in 1923, had given Mikhail Kalinin the order to organize the creation of an "autonomous Jewish republic" in Crimea. In 1946, after mass deporting Crimean Tatars² to Siberia and Central Asia, he accused the Jews of being responsible.

Indeed, he had previously set up the following stratagem: he had instructed Solomon Lozovski, chairman of the Soviet Information Bureau and member of the CJAF, to relaunch the idea of "Crimea for the Jews" within the committee and to draft a petition to that effect addressed to him. On February 15, 1944, Lozovski spoke about it to Mikhoëls, Epshtein and Fefer. The rumor of a Jewish Crimea circulated for some time among the Jewish refugees and in the camps for displaced persons. Then, Stalin neglected this project, which lost its interest, but he did not forget it. On October 12, 1946, on his order, the MGB submitted to the Council of Ministers a report entitled "On the nationalist demonstrations of certain members of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee", accusing the latter of machinations to create "an anti-Soviet base" in the Crimea. On November 26, Mikhail Suslov, secretary of the Central Committee and ideological watchdog, sent a report along the same lines to Stalin, in whose mind a "Crimean affair" was ripening.

At the beginning of November 1948, Suslov summoned all members of the CJAF and told them: "The time for action has come." The opinion of the Central Committee was that an autonomous Jewish republic should be created on the basis of the Autonomous Republic of Birobidzhan and that "all Jews living in the USSR should reunited."¹⁹ Solomon Lozovski objected that, having been an internationalist all his life, he saw nothing positive in the regrouping of Jews in Birobidjan. The poet Peretz Markish, who had succeeded Mikhoëls as president of the CJAF, expressed the same opinion and Suslov concludes: "I cannot stab my back²⁰ people in reported the CJAF's response to Stalin, who submitted to the Politburo the resolution

81: "The Office of the Council of Ministers of the USSR orders the Ministry of State Security to liquidate the Jewish Antifascist Committee, because the facts show that this committee was a center of anti-Soviet propaganda and that it regularly supplied the foreign secret services with information

anti-Soviet. In keeping with this decision, the journal of this committee will be closed and its archives confiscated. For the moment, no one will be arrested. »

Stalin's way of celebrating certain anniversaries in his own way resurfaced. On January 13, 1949, exactly one year after Mikhoels' assassination, Politburo member GM Malenkov summoned Lozovski and asked him to "confess" to his role in the conspiracy to separate Crimea from the USSR and to make "an American and Zionist base". He him

Showed the "Criminal Proofs" of his misdeeds: the letter dated February 15, 1944 that mikhoëls, epshtein and feper had adhered to stalin, at his own request, to support the yée of an autonomous jewish republic in the crimea. Five days later Lozovski was expelled from the party and eight days later he was arrested; at that time, all members of the CJAF were behind bars²².

Stalin had been anti-Semitic since his youth, but he had learned to hide it under the internationalist party line. His aversion to Jews had become more intense in the late 1930s, when he became aware of the number of Jews who had played a role in the story of the Okhrana dossier: Rabinovitch, who had found the file with Dzerzhinsky, Blumkin, who had tried to smuggle it abroad, Shtein, who had rediscovered it in Menzhinsky's office, Kastnelson, who had received it from Shtein, Gamarnik, who had kept the file in his office and who had conspired with Tukhachevsky against him, Reiss, who had informed the Trotskyists of the discovery of the dossier, Lyushkov, whom Stalin had commissioned to distribute the false "Eremin letter", Krivitsky and Orlov, who had both passed through the West and who knew his secrets. His hatred of the Jews became even more intense than his hatred of the Poles. His daughter Svetlana wrote that her father "only began to express his hatred of Jews after the war."

Khrushchev also wrote that during the last five "crazy" years of his life, "Stalin could no longer conceal his anti-Semitism." This aversion affected Svetlana herself: her father had refused to receive her husband Gregory Moroz because he was Jewish.

One of the most paradoxical aspects of Stalin's anti-Semitism is that he became most vocal precisely when he was pursuing a policy of supporting the young State of Israel; the explanation is that he hoped to transform Israel into a "people's democracy" similar to those he was creating in Europe. The murders of Mikhoëls and Epshtein, as well as the arrests of CJAF members, paralleled his efforts to make Israel a Soviet satellite. At the end of the Tehran conference, Roosevelt told Stalin that he intended to "review the whole question of Palestine with the King of Saudi Arabia". Stalin had vaguely replied that the Jewish problem was "extremely difficult"; no doubt he was thinking of Birobidjan, where he wanted to deport all the Jews of the USSR²⁵.

The recognition of Israel after its creation on May 14, 1948 was immediate from the United States and the USSR. And when the Arab countries attacked Israel in 1949, Stalin gave the order to supply it with arms. The Suez Canal being then under Franco-British control, Stalin toyed with the idea of creating another canal through the Negev desert.

But the events in Europe opened the eyes of the Jews: the "people's democracy" of Poland, the "Prague coup" in 1948, the assassination of the minister Jan Masaryk, who was found in the courtyard of his ministry, defenestrated after having received a gunshot behind the ear²⁷

—, the conflict between Stalin and Tito in the summer of 1948, the blockade of Berlin the same year were so many warnings. Israeli President Chaim Weizmann opposed the Jews who still idolized Stalin and Prime Minister Ben-Gurion had no more illusions: in 1938, he had already protested against the Moscow trials and called Stalin a kham **hagrouzini** ("Georgian Troublemaker²⁸"). —

Although Jewish, Molotov's wife, Polina Jemjoushina, was like her husband a fanatical admirer of Stalin. At a Kremlin reception, she dared to address a few words in Yiddish to Israel's first ambassador to Moscow, Golda Meir; she was promptly arrested and exiled.

Beria periodically whispered in Molotov's ear: Polina is alive!

No one would have imagined that at that time Stalin and the Politburo were discussing the deportation of all Jews to Birobidzhan.

But warning signs of a disaster were appearing. Thus, the 30

December 1949, all the Jews of the towns of Kuntsevo and Davydkovo, close to Stalin's dacha, were expelled: encouraged by the MGB, their neighbors shared their furniture³⁰. Stalin unleashed a campaign against "cosmopolitans, uprooted parasites, people without fire or place and vagabonds without passports", vituperations all the more explicit as they were illustrated with Jewish names. For Stalin, this sort of people was embodied in Trotsky, from whom he had stripped Soviet citizenship in 1930 and who died without a passport. And the MGB began a series of arrests of Jews and other "cosmopolitans", of which the press did not breathe a word.

For Stalin's 70th birthday, December 21, 1949, gifts poured in from all over the world and were displayed in a special museum; there was a fur coat donated by Jewish tailors in New York. But Stalin had already received his greatest gift in August, with the successful experimental test of the first A-bomb. Stalin's birthday would be celebrated by people all over the world and a new calendar would begin, not with the date of Christ's birth, but with that of Stalin.

In May 1950, Israel sided with the United States in condemning communist aggression in Korea. Stalin understood that his project had failed: Israel would not be a Soviet base in the Middle East; he was hurt by what he interpreted as ingratitude and betrayal of the Jews. The Soviet press refrained from mentioning the retreat of the North Korean troops and devoted whole pages to articles by Stalin on a new theme, the "language question". But the substance of the matter remained in fact the Jewish question, although it was not mentioned.

Stalin had stumbled across linguistics by leafing through a volume of the sixteen-volume Jewish Encyclopedia, confiscated during the mass arrests of Jews in 1949 (the mere possession of this Russian-language work, published in 1913, constituted proof of "bourgeois Jewish nationalism").

He stopped at an article on the Georgian language; it said that a young linguist, Niko Marr, had at the beginning of the 20th century put

forward the hypothesis that the Georgian language was of Semitic origin³¹. Marr availab

several disciples, who did not know that they were, in Stalin's eyes, sinners.

It was impossible to compel Marr, who died in 1934, to "confess" his error; Stalin therefore furiously attacked his thesis in **Pravda**, invited Georgian academician and linguist AS Shikobaba to dinner and raised the language question. Khrushchev, present at the dinner, did not know what to make of this sudden interest in linguistics. Stalin ordered the head of his secretariat, Poskrebyshev, to find him pre-revolutionary publications on linguistics. When Poskrebyshev brought them to him, Stalin interrupted a conversation with an admiral; this one remained confounded with admiration in front of the extent of the readings of his master³⁴.

No doubt Stalin suspected that Marr's theory had some basis. Already in 1940, he had changed the title of the magazine **Iveria**, the old name of Georgia, to **Sakartvelo**, a modern name; for Marr, this very name of Iveria was a clue to the Semitic origin of Georgian.

Stalin had him banned from all publications and even from his childhood poems, and Marr's followers lost their posts, had their theses canceled and were even arrested; no one suspected the underlying reason for the storm.

Stalin's interest in linguistics did not stop there: he was troubled by another linguistic theory, according to which the Basques, Albanians and Georgians all belonged to the same group of Iberian populations that once lived in the Mediterranean basin. It was therefore possible, for Stalin at any rate, that the Jews belonged to the same group and he found in this one more reason to justify his aversion to the Georgians; he said, in fact, to his daughter that, as soon as the Georgians "open their mouths, they yell like imbeciles". He began to deny his own Georgian origins and henceforth used the formula: "We, the Russians."

His interest in the ethnic origin of peoples disconcerted some of his visitors; thus, he asked point-blank to Edvard Kardelj, Deputy Prime Minister of Yugoslavia: "What is the origin of the Albanians? »

Kardelj replied that they were descended from the Illyrians. "Tito told me they were related to the Basques," Stalin insisted. Kardelj nodded. "They seem backward," Stalin continued. "Yes, but they are very brave and loyal," replied Kardelj. "Like dogs," retorted Stalin, "he is a

trait of primitive people. — He was also pushing Youggie to annex Albania, which surprised Milovan Djilas, and inspired him to retort: "Comrade Stalin, there is no question of absorbing Albania, but only of establishing relations of friendship and alliance between the two countries. Whereupon Molotov, reassuringly, told him that it was "the same thing." —

Stalin's anti-Semitism did not wane: the director of the Stalin automobile-building firm in Moscow, Al Likhachev, received a report that Jewish engineers under him were carrying out sabotage; he called his collaborator Giorgy Meerson, with whom he had worked for years, and warned him: "Trust me, quit right away. Otherwise I'm going to have to fire you to save you. Don't ask questions."

— Meerson took the advice and was one of the few to escape arrest and execution in a special ground, **spets ouchastok**, near Moscow. There, the guards ordered the accused to run and let their dogs behind them. Chief engineer Edinov died first: weakened by torture, he was unable to run. —

Stalin's health aggravated the problem. At the end of 1951, during a routine examination by his personal doctor, Professor VN Vinogradov, Stalin told him that two members of the Politburo, AS Shcherbakov (in 1946) and AA Zhdanov (in 1948), had been poisoned by doctors in the Kremlin. And Stalin quoted the names of these doctors; they were all Jews. Vinogradov knew them and objected to him that he had perfect confidence in their honesty and their skills. After the examination, he advised her to take it easy. This advice awoke an echo in Stalin: thirty years earlier, when he was preparing to hasten Lenin's end, he had also demanded that the latter be relieved of his daily duties. He suspected Vinogradov of plotting against him and had him arrested. This practitioner, from a large family of doctors, was accused of having been an accomplice in the poisoning of Chtcherbakov and Zhdanov. In fact, Zhdanov's death was due to much more than the "heart failure" of the official death certificate or some doctor's intrigue. In August 1947, during a family dinner (Svetlana had divorced her Jewish husband and married Andrei Zhdanov's son, Youry) Stalin had already attacked Zhdanov violently: "Look at him, sitting there like the Christ, as if nothing mattered to him!" A glare that had cast an icy chill.⁴⁰ Stalin's illegitimate son, Konstantin —

Kouzakov, had been pressed by the MGB to accuse Zhdanov of having relaxed his vigilance in matters of atomic espionage⁴¹: this was the "Leningrad affair", which had culminated in 1949-1950, after Zhdanov's death, in the liquidation of the "Zhdanov's nest", as well as the arrest and sometimes execution of thousands of Leningrad officials, including their leader, NA Vozhnesensky. One morning, Molotov, Khrushchev and Malenkov dared to pronounce Vozhnesensky's name in front of Stalin. "Before continuing," he cut off, "you should know that Vozhnesensky was executed this morning.

Are you also enemies of the people? »

Nevertheless, Stalin instructed Riumin, who had belonged to his personal secretariat and who was now head of the special investigative department of the MGB, to obtain from the Kremlin radiologist, Lydia Timashouk, an "unofficial" collaborator of the MGB, an incriminating deposition. On the basis of this report, Riumin set up the "case of the Kremlin doctors" and submitted the file for approval to the Minister of State Security, Abakumov; the latter in turn submitted it to Beria. The two men were appalled: clearly, they had in their hands an anti-Semitic fabrication that threatened to trigger a huge scandal.

Moreover, they risked being hit themselves, by ricochet, because these accusations would mean that the MGB and State Security had not been vicious enough. Abakumov called Riumin a "stupid adventurer" and ordered him to throw his file in the trash. Riumin complained to Stalin that Abakumov and Beria were blocking the investigation. Stalin refrained from reacting for the moment, but ordered his daughter not to go to Beria's any more: "I don't trust this man!" ", he told her. And he went on vacation in Georgia.

Then he gave the order to arrest "all Beria's men", to isolate him. He charged by decree the Mingrelians, a sub-group of Georgians to which Beria belonged, of collective treason; in witness whereof, he decided to exile them all to Siberia. — He summoned to his dacha in Barjomi the chief of the MGB of Georgia, NM Roukadjé, and ordered him to arrest all Mingrelian generals. On the way back to Tbilisi, Roukadjé began to smoke cigarette after cigarette. Something is wrong? asked his driver, Colonel Samson Paroulava, himself a Mingrelian.

Returning to Moscow in August 1951, Stalin learned that Abakumov had arrested Ryutin for refusing to destroy the file of Jewish doctors. On his way to Stalin's house on the second floor of the Kremlin, Abakumov was stopped at the elevator door by General Vlasik, head of Stalin's bodyguards; Vlasik took his belt from him, tore off his shoulder pads and led him to the Lubyanka. Colonel Mironov, head of the prison, could not believe his eyes when he saw the new prisoner arrive, the very Minister of State Security to whom he had submitted a report a few hours earlier.

"Take him away!" shouted Vlasik⁴⁸. Abakumov was thrown into the very cell from which Ryutin had just emerged with Stalin's order to continue the investigation.

On October 20, 1951, the new Minister of State Security, SD Ignatiev, signed the warrant for the arrest of Lev Sheinin, an investigator in charge of "special cases", who had for years carried out Stalin's personal missions and published books on the heroic exploits of the secret police. He was accused of being a foreign spy and the leader of the "white coated assassins", that is to say the Jewish doctors of the Kremlin⁴⁹. In reality, his crime was to have refused to believe Mikhoëls' version of the car accident, despite the "explanation" offered to him by a general of the MGB, summoned by Stalin: Zionists would have killed Mikhoëls, because, like a true patriot, he had refused to work with them. Annoyed by Sheinine's obstinacy, Stalin had him arrested; during the interrogation, his case was detached from that of the "assassins in white coats" and

compared to that of the "Jewish nationalists", that is to say of Jewish writers and poets of Russian expression such as Vassily Grossman⁵⁰, Alexander Stein and Konstantin Finn⁵⁰, to which were added the screenwriter Alexei Kapler, Svetlana's childhood crush, who was brought back from the Vorkuta camp to be thrown into the Lubyanka: from "English spy", he had become "Jewish nationalist".

In the summer of 1952, and for the first time in a long time, Stalin did not take a vacation: he was preparing for the show trial of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee. This trial took place from May 8 to July 18 and was held before the military tribunal of the Supreme Court. Thirteen defendants, including Lozovski, were condemned to be shot. Lydia Shtern, a specialist in longevity, a question of great interest to Stalin, was only sentenced to three years in prison. Mon

of the accused died during his interrogations. One hundred and ten defendants were subsequently tried: ten more were sentenced to death, five died during interrogation and the others were sentenced to prison terms ranging from five to twenty-five years.

On October 5, 1952, Stalin inaugurated the XIX Party Congress, the first since 1939 the West of "warmongers". Stalin's speech was brief. He called for "the preservation and maintenance of peace"; he was greeted with thunderous applause.

Stalin had himself photographed surrounded by marshals, generals and admirals; he intended to blackmail the West with the threat of nuclear war. He was encouraged by the tests of a thermonuclear bomb and gave the order to accelerate the construction of long-range aircraft and missiles capable of dropping atomic weapons on American soil.

"We'll teach this Jewish shopkeeper to attack us!" , he often thundered, believing that Truman was Jewish. An aviation colonel, a friend of Vassily Stalin, told Svetlana: "Now is the time to fight and conquer, while your father is alive!" Now we can win!"⁵³

During Congress, the Politburo was renamed the Presidium and its composition increased from nine to twenty-five members. Khrushchev interpreted this change as the annihilation of the old Politburo and the desire to hide "its shameful actions"⁵⁴. The truth was more subtle: Stalin was the last survivor of the Politburo created by Lenin to deal with the scandal of the denunciation of Roman Malinovsky as a member of

the Okhrana; in this way, Stalin broke with his past and with the Okhrana.

November 7, 1952 marked the 35th anniversary of the October Revolution. In the evening, Stalin attended a reception at the Bolshoi; each time his name was spoken, the audience rose and cheered him. Pravda called him "the genius of all progressive humanity" . India's ambassador, Krishna Menon, wondered how this grizzled old man had come to wield "more power than any human ever had."

However, Stalin's anti-Semitic vindictiveness continued. In November 1952, the People's Court in Prague was the scene of another show trial; the accused were Czechoslovak leaders, mostly Jews. Rudolf Slanski, general secretary of the party, was the principal of them. The affair had begun a year earlier with the arrival in Prague of Anastas Mikoyan, the bearer of Stalin's instructions for Klement Gottwald, president of Czechoslovakia: Slanski and others had to be arrested, lest they environment; their crime was supplying weapons to Israel during the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. However, as we have seen above, it was Stalin himself who had encouraged the export of arms to Israel. Slanski and his co-defendants considered themselves "internationalists" and as such were opposed for ideological reasons to Stalin's pro-Israel policies. He therefore made them pay for the failure of his own strategy.

One of the leaders of the Israeli Mapam party, Mordechai Oren, who had announced to a Soviet agent in London that the Jews would make Israel a pro-Soviet state, was arrested in Czechoslovakia. MT Likachev, deputy head of the MGB's department for important affairs and specially delegated to Prague for the occasion, asked him: "Why did you make fun of us?" he asked Oren.

It was an echo of Stalin's sentiment: Israel's leftist Jews had tricked him into thinking they would turn their country into a Soviet satellite. They thought they were cheating Stalin! " , he said.

Slanski and ten other defendants were sentenced to death by hanging; a very unusual ordeal in Czechoslovakia as in the USSR. It strangely evoked the hanging of two Georgians which had been witnessed by a certain twelve-year-old boy named Soso in a square in Gori.

Stalin's memory, in fact, began to alter and reorganize itself according to its own laws. Thus, he could sometimes no longer remember the names of collaborators whom he nevertheless saw every day.

During a dinner at his dacha, he turned one evening to his defense minister, Nikolai Bulganin, and asked him: "You over there, what is your name? and when the other had answered, he added: "Of course, Bulganin, that's what I meant."

Testimony to the resurgence of Stalin's childhood memories: in early 1953, he revived in Georgia the old legend according to which the Jews bled the little Christians to make their unleavened bread. At his instigation, the Tbilisi secret police unleashed a hysterical woman, Nataly Kavtarajé, on the streets, screaming that Jews had been caught rolling Christian children in barrels bristling with nails to draw blood from them. However, the last time we had heard these noises in Georgia, it was in the childhood of Stalin: it was then about a young girl found dead, the body covered with small wounds that we had believed produced by nails. A wave of hysteria swept through Tbilisi even after the defendants were acquitted, their lawyers having shown that the girl had drowned during heavy downpours and that her injuries had been caused by the bites of small animals.

Another testimony to the same phenomenon, Stalin commissioned a play on the pseudo-hero of his youth, Pavlik Morozov, and "indicated" the plot and the dialogues⁶¹. — He erected a statue of the boy at the entrance to the Red Square and, fearing that his remains would reveal the true cause of his death, had them transported overnight and buried under a concrete slab two meters thick, under the statue of the boy in his native village⁶². —

At the same time, he undertook to erase all traces of his crimes. A colossal task: the whole country was strewn with the mass graves of its victims who could, like those of Katyn, suddenly reveal their secrets. Some, such as that of Kuropaty, near Minsk, were excavated and the skeletons destroyed. — It was also necessary to remove the printed traces; so we saw, in January and February 1953, the Komsomols (Communist Youth) and the members of the party mobilized to go through the collections of newspapers and periodicals in the libraries and archives, and to destroy the negative references to Stalin and the positive ones and Trotsky and to the "enemies of the people". Abroad, Soviet agents did the same in some American and European libraries for periodicals, dating back to 1917, to remove mentions of links between the Bolsheviks and the Okhrana. Finally, hundreds of shades of bronze were devoted to the erection of statues of Stalin⁶⁶. —

In January 1953, the USSR Ministry of Internal Affairs printed a million copies of a folicle titled **Why It Is Inevitable to Exile Jews from the Industrial Centers of the Country.**

The work was written by DI Chesnokov, holder of the chair of Marxism-Leninism at the University of Moscow; he was a friend of Svetlana's husband, Youry Zhdanov, and he was appointed editor first of the periodical **Problems of Philosophy**, then of **Communist**. He had been introduced to Stalin at a birthday party for Svetlana and had told her that he was establishing the theoretical basis for the deportation of Chechens, Volga Germans, Crimean Tatars and others, which Stalin had d elsewhere exiled several years earlier. Stalin advised him to concentrate on the deportation of the Jews and sent him to work for this purpose in the dacha of the Central Committee, near Moscow. This was how the folicle was born. In the meantime, Chesnokov had been elected to the new Presidiu

At that time, the Ministry of Internal Affairs employed the prisoners of the gulags in the accelerated construction of barracks in Birobidjan, the island of Novaya Zemlya and other regions of Siberia where the Jews were to be deported. Stalin had created a Deportation Commission which responded only to his orders; the president was Suslov and the secretary, NN Poliakov. The latter reported, years later, that Stalin's original plan had been to begin the deportation in mid-February 1953, but that the monumental census of all Jews had not been completed by then. Two lists of Jews were being compiled: one was that of "thoroughbred" Jews, who were to be deported first; the others, the **poloukrovki** ("half-blood"), who had only one Jewish parent, would later be deported.

The delay in drawing up the lists forced Stalin to a very strict schedule: the trial of the Kremlin doctors was to take place from March 5 to 7; after which, on March 11 and 12, would follow their executions on the **lobnoe mesto**, center of the In Stalin's plans, the public hanging of the Jewish doctors was to give the signal for a pogrom; then he would intervene as the "savior" of the Jews by snatching them from the wrath of the population and by deporting them to "safe places71".

On January 13, 1953, the fifth anniversary of Mikhoels' assassination, Pravda **published** the first Tass report on the arrest of a group of Kremlin doctors accused of being agents of the Jewish organization Comité associative of distribution and the American secret services, under the orders of the "well-known bourgeois nationalist Solomon Mikhoëls⁷²". These doctors were also accused of having cut short the lives of members of the Politburo Zhdanov and Shcherbakov and of having endangered those of Soviet marshals, generals and admirals. Dr. Vinogradov was accused of being an agent of English espionage. A front-page editorial in **Pravda**, titled "Infamous Spies and Murderers in the Masks of Doctors and Professors," accused the "doctor poison gang" and their American and British leaders of "feverishly preparing a new world war"; he also blamed "state security organs" for their lack of vigilance, reminding readers that doctors Levin and Pletnev had "killed the great Russian writer Maxim Gorky and leading statesmen VV Kuibyshev and VR Menzhinsky⁷³".

The accusation of "lack of vigilance" was directed against Beria and the Minister of State Security Abakumov, already behind bars. Stalin spread the rumor that Beria was Jewish. Arrested MGB generals, all Mingrelians, were charged with a plot to separate the western province of Mingrelia from Georgia and the USSR. They were forced to "confess" their plot and implicate Beria. In Stalin's mind there was a fusion⁷⁴ between the Jews and the plotters. When Mingrelians he was given the depositions of the Mingrelian generals, he recommended not to forget "their leader", that is to say Beria, and wrote in red pencil: "Death to the Mingrelians⁷⁵". The houses and apartments of the latter were placed on special lists, pending their deportation to Siberia, which was to take place at the same time as that of the Jews. Cossacks armed with sabers and whips arrived in the Mingrelian towns, where their appearance and their pre-revolutionary costumes filled the populations with astonishment. *

A rain of accusations against the "assassins in white coats" swept over the country, creating an atmosphere of pogrom. The administration of

gulag was ordered to encourage prisoners to murder fellow Jews.

Israel noticed it. On February 9, 1953, terrorists detonated a bomb at the USSR Embassy in Tel Aviv. Stalin used this as a pretext to break off diplomatic relations with Israel. He gave the director of the Tass agency and the head of the party's propaganda department, Yakov S. Khavinson and M.B. Mitin, both Jews, a list of prominent Jews, who should address him with an appeal which he had drawn up himself. The text; it began with a condemnation of the "assassins in white coats", whose signatories demanded their execution; it continued with a "prayer to the great and wise **vojd** ("leader") comrade Stalin to save the Jewish population from the understandable fury of the Russian people" by transferring the Jews to "safe places" in Siberia and the Far East.

Khavinson and Mitin, who had joined forces with Zaslavski, a well-known journalist, and the academician and historian Il Minz, signed this text and promised to solicit the signatures of the Jews on this list and to convince others to cooperate with the authorities during "transfer to safe places." They went, in fact, to all the Jews on the list; most of them signed, fearing Stalin's wrath. Only a few refused: General Yakov Kreizer, singer Mark Reizen, writer Veniamin Kaverin and Professor Arkady Ierusalimsky, who taught Svetlana.

In a letter to Stalin, the writer Ilya Ehrenburg asked him whether or not he should sign the appeal, observing that the deportation of the Jews could damage the Soviet image abroad and the peace movement; Stalin did not respond.

Several years later, the rumor spread that Lazar Kaganovich had refused to sign and had thrown his party card on Stalin's desk in protest. But Kaganovitch was appointed to direct the deportation⁷⁹ by Stalin, who crossed out his name in red pencil on the lists. The choice of this man, a Jew, to lead the deportation was shrewd: who would have suspected him of anti-Semitism? Stalin saw in him not a Jew, but an accomplice who took his side, even in the murder of his brother Mikhail; he knew he could count on this Kaganovitch, an anti-Semitic Jew and a depraved character, to help him in the extermination of the Jews. Unaware that anti-Semitism is a psychological trait, Khrushchev

was indignant in his memoirs: "A Jew himself, Kaganovitch was against the Jews⁸⁰!" »

If Kaganovitch had really refused to sign the appeal, he wouldn't have survived this act of insubordination anyway. Someone in Stalin's entourage refused to sign and protested. The signing took place around February 13, 1953. However, Pravda **on** the 14th announced that one of the eminent leaders of the Communist Party and the Soviet Union, Lev Mekhlis, a member of the Central Committee, had died of heart failure.—

Stalin instructed Khrushchev to stir up anti-Semitism in Ukraine, placed under his responsibility. "Good factory workers should be given truncheons to make these Jews see all the colors," he told Khrushchev. At the beginning of 1953, he invited him to dinner, as well as two senior Ukrainian officials, Melnikov and Korochenko; as usual, they drank a lot. Stalin told the Ukrainians that they should organize pogroms at home; they were surprised to hear such recommendations from the mouth of the "great internationalist" that was supposed to be Stalin, but they knew that it was better to carry out his instructions⁸² and, once back home, they organized, indeed, pogroms. Leonid Brezhnev, a protege of Khrushchev, was elevated to a candidate member of the Presidium in October 1952 and Stalin sent him to Moldavia to oversee the deportation of Jews.

Some of Stalin's minions were married to Jewish women, who became the object of his most intense suspicions. He well remembered the story of Esther, which he had read in the Bible, in the seminary; he knew that between the end of February and the beginning of March, the Jews would celebrate Purim to thank God for having given them this woman, the Jewish wife of a former king of Persia, who had saved them from their enemy Haman. He planned to start the pogroms in March, to show the Jews that their thanksgiving was premature. But he feared that among these Jewish wives there was a new Esther capable of thwarting his deportation project. He therefore exiled Voroshilov's Jewish wife and called him a British spy. He ordered the arrest of Andrei Andreiev's Jewish wife, Dora Khazan, and expelled Andreiev from the Politburo. Already exiled to Kustanai, Kazakhstan, where she was codenamed "object number 12", Polina

Jemjuschina, Molotov's wife, was brought back to Moscow and thrown into the Lubyanka in January 1953, in order to be attached to the case of the "assassins in white coats" (she was freed by Beria a few days after Stalin's death and returned to Molotov⁸⁴). Next, Stalin accused Molotov of being an American spy. General Krulev's wife was arrested and thrown into the high-security Vladimir Central prison, along with other Jewish wives of regime officials.

All bridges broken, Stalin suspected Zhukov of being a Jew⁸⁶ and, before exiling him to the Urals, showed him a report signed by Beria, as well as wording: "We have established that Marshal GK Zhukov was for more than fifteen years an agent of the British Intelligence Service and that he continuously informed this hostile power of the defense secrets of the Soviet Union⁸⁷. »

Lieutenant General N. Vlasik, head of Stalin's bodyguards for several years, was arrested on December 15, 1952 and accused of "lack of vigilance", for having maintained cordial relations with his Jewish neighbour, to whom he allegedly passed "secret information⁸⁸". In early 1953, Stalin fired the head of his personal secretariat, Alexander Poskrebyshchev, his most trusted aide for many years; he remembered, in fact, that the latter's wife, who had been poisoned on his orders in 1940, was a distant relative of Trotsky. Poskrebyshchev expected to be arrested too.

Stalin spent most of February 1953 in Kuntsevo surrounded by his bodyguards, mostly Russians and a few Georgians from his home town of Gori. He ordered State Security Minister Ignatiev to torture Vinogradov and other Kremlin doctors, and threatened him: "If you don't get results, we'll shorten you

— of a In head⁹⁰. In his memories, Khrushchev says he insulted Ignatiev ignominiously: "Insane with rage, he addressed him screaming and threatening him, asking that he chain the doctors and beat them until reduce them to powder⁹¹. — they bled, then openly in party and government circles for the "liberation" of the USSR from the Jewish yoke. The Council of Ministers dealt with the technical problems of the deportation of the Jews. "I thought I was losing my mind

on hearing of it", recounted the Old Bolshevik OI Goloborodko⁹³. Informed of the difficulties of transporting so many people to remote areas, Stalin observed: "Half will die on the way⁹⁴ .

— " Ten years

earlier, indeed, tens of thousands of Crimean Tatars, Chechens, Kabardines and Volga Germans had been exiled far from their native lands, in Siberia and the Far East, and nearly half had perished on the way.

On February 17, 1953, Stalin invited to his home the Indian ambassador, Krishna Menon; the latter was the last foreigner to see him alive. During their interview, Stalin doodled wolves in an aggressive posture, some solitary, others in pairs or in packs. Seeing that Menon was looking at his drawings, Stalin said to him:

"The Russian peasant is a very simple, but wise person. When the wolf attacks him, he does not try to teach him morality, he kills him. And the wolf knows this and behaves accordingly."⁹⁵

Suddenly, to Menon's surprise, Stalin asked him about the degree of impurity of the languages of India.

The end of this month of February was oppressive; according to Svetlana, it was like the calm before the storm. Stalin ordered the Minister of Defense, Bulganin, to bring around Moscow hundreds of cattle cars which would be parked on the sidings; he intended to use them to deport the Jews. A historian estimated that 30 to 40% of them did not reach their destination⁹⁸.

Everything was ready for the trial of the Kremlin doctors. That year, Purim was to begin at sunset, Saturday, February 28, the 14th day of the month of Adar in the year 5713, according to the Jewish calendar.

NOTES

¹. Yakov Aisenshtat, **O podgotovke Stalinyim genotsida evreev**, Jerusalem, 1994, p. 38.

². Alliloueva, **Only One Year**, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

³. Interview with Lydia Shatounovskaïa and Lev Tumerman, in Rehovot, Israel, 1975. Author's archive.

⁴. "V kommissi Politburo TK KPSS", **Protocol**, No. 7, December 1988-January 1989.

5. Recorded interview with Vassily Rouditch (author's archives). See also Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 261 **sq.** Rouditch reported the testimony of Olga Shatunovskaya, a member of the special commission of the Presidium of the Central Committee. She and NM Schvernink, chairman of this commission, USSR Prosecutor General RA Roudenko, KGB Chairman A. N. Shelepin and the director of the administration section of the Central Committee, NR Mironov, questioned Politburo member Georgy Malenkov, who detailed Stalin's order to assassinate Mikhoels.

6. A. Borshchagovski, **Obviniaetsia krov'**, Moscow, 1994, p. 5-8, as well as Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**, p. 39-41, citing a report by Beria of April 2, 1953, to the Presidium of the Central Committee.

7. **Ibid.** See also Conquest, **Stalin, op. cit.**, p. 306.

8. Alliloueva, **Only One Year, op. cit.**, p. 154.

9. The author and his classmate Mikhail Margulis were present at the funeral and heard the rumour. Two years later, film director Mikhail Kalik was arrested on charges of having

spread the rumor of the assassination of Mikhoëls by MGB agents.

10. **Pravda**, August 25, 1941.

11. YA Gilboa, **The Black Years of Soviet Jewry**, Boston-Toronto, 1971, p. 42-56.

12. Kirk, **op. cit.**, p. 202-205.

13. Interview with Matetiahou Shmoulevich in Jaffa, Israel, archives of the author. See also Gilboa, **op. cit.**, p. 202-206 and **64sq.**; as well as the author's interviews with Samuel Tornopoler, in Tel-Aviv, and with David Ben-Gurion, in Tel-Aviv and Sde-Boker, February 1969, and letter from Ben-Gurion to Gilboa, January 31, 1967, in **The Black Years...**, **op. cit.**, p. 352.

14. Interview with Mordechai Oren in Israel, in 1969 (author's archives).

15. Interview with Boris Guiel, director of the Chaïm Weizmann archives, Tel-Aviv, 1969 (author's archives).

16. Interview with Natalia and Alexandre Rodovski, Haifa, Israel, 1979 (author's archives).

17. Interview with Lydia Shatounovskaïa and Lev Tumerman, Rehovot, Israel, 1979.

- [18.](#) "V kommissi Politburo TK KPSS", **op. cit.**
- [19.](#) A. Vaisberg, "Evreiski antifakhisty komitet ou MA Souslov", **Zveniya istoricheskii almanakh**, Moscow, 1991, p. 535-554.
- [20.](#) **Ibid.**, p. 546.
- [21.](#) "V kommissi Politburo TK KPSS", **op. cit.** See also Arkady Vaksberg, **Stalin against the Jews**, New York, 1994, p. 198-202.
- [22.](#) **Ibid.**
- [23.](#) Alliloueva, **Dvadsat pisem k drougou**, **op. cit.**, p. 150.
- [24.](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 258-269.
- [25.](#) Edward R. Stettinius, Jr., **Roosevelt and the Russians: the Yalta Conference**, London, 1950, p. 278.
- [26.](#) Interview with David Lifshitz, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1969 (archives of the author). Interview with Matetiahou Shmoulevich, **cf.** note 13. GS Nikitina, **Gosoudartsvo Israel**, Moscow, 1968, p. 58-74.
- [27.](#) Henry Kamm, "Inquiry on Jan Masaryk's Death, in 1948, is demanded in Prague", **The New York Times**, April 3, 1968. See also CL Sulzberger, "Foreign Affairs: Murder Will Out", **The New York Times**, April 17, 1968.
- [28.](#) Interview with David Ben-Gurion, **cf.** footnote 13.
- [29.](#) Youry Idashkine, "Lichni drug Stalina Bogi jaidout", **Literatournaya Russia**, July 22, 1988.
- [30.](#) Interview with Anna and Boris Glick, residents of Davydkovo and victims of the exile order, New York, 1967 (author's archive).
- [31.](#) **Evreiskaya entsiklopedia**, vol. VI, Saint-Petersburg, 1913, p. 808 **sq.**
- [32.](#) M. Gorbanevsky, "Tovarishch Stalin, vy bolshoi oucheny", interview in: **Nedelia**, n° 45, 5-11 November 1990, p. 4.
- [33.](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 270 **sq.**
- [34.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 332 **sq.**
- [35.](#) Allilueva, **Twenty Letters to a Friend**, **op. cit.**, p. 187.
- [36.](#) Vladimir Dedijer, **Tito Speaks: His Self-Portrait and Struggle with Stalin**, London, 1953, p. 300-312.
- [37.](#) Milovan Djilas, **op. cit.**, p. 176-181.

[38.](#) Interview with Mikhaïl Meerson-Aksenov, son of Grigory Meerson, New York, 1989 (author's archives).

[39](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 325.

[40.](#) Allilueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 384.

[41.](#) Evgueny Jirnov, "K. Kouzakov - syn IV Stalina", **Argumenty i facty**, n° 39, 1995.

[42](#) Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 575, citing Khrushchev's secret speech at the XX Party Congress.

[43.](#) Khrushchev's secret speech. See also Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 282-286.

[44.](#) Boris Nikolaevsky, "The Strange Death of Mikhail Ryumin", **The New Leader**, 4 October 1954, p. 15-18. See also John J. Dziak, **Chekisty, A History of the KGB**, Lexington, Ma., 1988, p. 127.

[45.](#) Allilueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 386.

[46](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 312.

[47.](#) Interview with Nougzar Sharia, Sag Harbor, New York, 1972.

[48.](#) Recorded interview with IP Itskov, New York, 1988.

[49.](#) Arkady Vaksberg, "The Grand Inquisitor Right-Hand Man", **Literary International Gazette**, vol. I, no. 5, April 1990, p. 7.

[50.](#) **Ibid.**

[51.](#) "V kommissi Politburo TK KPSS", **op. cit.**, protocol n° 7, dated 29 December 1988.

[52.](#) Interview with Israeli diplomat Yakov Yanaï, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 1971 who could reach the United States and drop atomic bombs there.

[53.](#) Alliloueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 155.

[54](#) Khrushchev's secret speech.

[55.](#) KPS Menon, **The Flying Troika**, London, 1963, p. 7.

[56.](#) Interview with Mordechai Oren, **cf.** footnote 14.

[57.](#) Allilueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 392.

[58](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 307 **sq.**

[59.](#) Interview with Nougzar Sharia, **cf.** footnote 47.

[60.](#) **Evreiskaya entsiklopedia**, **op. cit.**, vol. IX, p. 918-940.

[61.](#) **Pravda**, January 18, 1953.

[62.](#) Youry Druzhnikov, "Saga o Pavlike Morozove", **Strana i mir**, n° 2 (44), March-April 1988, p. 119.

[63.](#) Zenon Pozniak and Evgueny Shigalev, "Kouropaty-doroga death", **Novoe rousskoie slovo**, June 24, 1988, p. 6. See also Youry Tourine, "Sodnoie storony, s drougoi storony", **Ogoniok**, n° 39, Moscow, 1988.

[64.](#) Interview with Yakov and Diana Vinkovetski, friends of Pavel Litvinov, at Chappaqua, New York, 1975. They took part in this operation of censorship.

[65.](#) In 1974, the author became aware that in the collections of Russian newspapers in the libraries of Columbia, Stanford, Yale and several other universities, articles on the links between the Bolsheviks and the Okhrana had been deleted. Thus, from an article in the **Rousskoie slovo** of May 19, 1917, and from another in the **Den'** of June 16, 1917; but apart from these cuts, the collections were intact.

[66.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 508.

[67.](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 326.

[68.](#) Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**, p. 79. See also Z. Sheinis, **Grozila deportatsiya**, Moscow, 1991.

[69.](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 325 **sq.** See also Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 496. Interview by the author in Chappaqua, New York, 1975, with Boris Zoubok, who saw the barracks of Novaya Zemlya.

[70.](#) Z. Sheinis, **Provokatsiya veka**, Moscow, 1994, citing the testimony of the secretary of the deportation commission, NN Poliakov.

[71.](#) Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**, p. 70-74.

[72.](#) **Pravda**, January 13, 1953.

[73.](#) **Ibid.**

[74.](#) Conquest, **Stalin**, **op. cit.**, p. 306.

[75.](#) Interview with N. Sharia, Sag Harbor, New York, 1972; Sharia related to the author memories of her uncle, Peter Sharia, one of the arrested "Mingrelian bandits" to whom Beria had shown the files.

[76.](#) **Ibid.** Sharia evoked the story of the Hero of the Soviet Union, the Mingrelian Meliton Kantaria. See also **The New York Times**, December 31, 1993, p. A-24.

[77.](#) At the Norilsk camp, the author witnessed attacks by criminals from common law on Jews.

[78.](#) Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**, p. 70-72. See also **Strana i mir**, Munich, 1984, no. 10, p. 4. Ehrenburg's letter is reproduced in Vaksberg, **op. cit.**, p. 263 **sq.**

[79](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 325 See also Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 495-497.

[80](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 243.

[81.](#) **Pravda**, February 14, 1953, p. 1.

[82](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 258-264.

[83.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 495 **sq.**

[84](#) Vaksberg, **op. cit.**, p. 272 See also Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 308.

[85.](#) Interview with Lydia Shatunovskaya, Rehovot, Israel, 1979.

Shatunovskaya had been one of the prisoners at Vladimir Central.

[86.](#) Djilas, **op. cit.**, p. 160 **sq.**

[87](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 327.

[88.](#) AN Kolesnik, "Glavnik teleokhranitel'vojdia", **Voenno istoricheskii journal**, no. 12, 1989, p. 85-92.

[89.](#) Interview with IP Itskov, **cf.** footnote 48.

[90.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 494.

[91](#) Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 286 **sq.**

[92.](#) Allilueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 165.

[93.](#) Antonov-Ovseenko, **op. cit.**, p. 326.

[94.](#) Interview with Alexander Radovski, **cf.** footnote 16.

[95](#) Menon, **op. cit.**, p. 29 See also Hyde, **op. cit.**, p. 591.

[96.](#) Allilueva, **Only One Year**, **op. cit.**, p. 155.

[97.](#) Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**, p. 70 and 74 **sq.**, quoting Bulganin's declarations to Professor Eitinger, in: **Khronika delaclearchey**, p. 4-7.

[98.](#) The historian is EV Tarle, quoted in Aisenshtat, **op. cit.**

Ministry of State Security, successor to the NKVD .

The Tatars then constituted 23% of the Crimean population .

Iveria, from which derives the name of the ancient people of the Iberians, presents, in
Indeed, similarities with the Russian word **Evreia**, "Jewishness" (NdT).

37

The murder of Dr. Moreau

Stalin spent the last days of February 1953 at his dacha in Kuntsevo. On the night of Saturday February 28 to Sunday March 1, he went to bed late, at 4 o'clock. In the morning, his bodyguard, Gogi Zautashvili, also a native of Gori, considered the dashboard whose indicator lights indicated the opening of each of the doors of the three identical and communicating rooms of Stalin's apartment. He worried that one of the lamps had not gone out; this meant that the door had not closed automatically. He waited a moment, then informed the head of the guards on duty, Mr. Starostine. At first he was reluctant to disturb Stalin. But an hour later, he resolved to call her on the phone; no answer. After several unsuccessful calls, he ordered the guards to break down the armored door of the apartment. They found Stalin lying on the doorstep between the second and third bedrooms. He was lying curled up, his head on one arm. He couldn't speak.

His right rib was paralyzed.

The guards and the maid carried him to his bed. — . starostin informed Ignatiev, the Minister of State Security, who refused to intervene and advised him to call two of the Politburo members, Beria and Malenkov. Beria did not answer. Malenkov called Starostin back and said, "I couldn't find Beria. Try to reach him yourself." Beria then telephoned and gave the following order: "Don't tell anyone about Stalin's discomfort, don't telephone anyone!" Beria and Malenkov arrived on the night of Sunday to Monday, March 2, at 3 a.m. Malenkov took off his squeaking shoes and went on tiptoe to bend over the patient. Beria observed Stalin's face; he knew that the tyrant intended to destroy him, his chance of escape was to kill him, he turned to the guard and shouted to him: "Don't make a fuss, don't disturb us and don't disturb the Comrade Stalin." He swore at Starostin in words impossible to reproduce except these: "Who chose you morons to serve Comrade Stalin?" He then announced the arrival of the doctors

with Malenkov. The doctors indeed arrived: at 9 o'clock, six hours later.

—

Meanwhile, back in Moscow, Beria settled the situation to his advantage at the Lubyanka. Ignatiev rushed to the rescue and they arrested the head of the special affairs department, Ryutin, and all his assistants.

The Mingrelian generals, who were beginning to suffer the effects of several months of torture, were taken from their cells to Beria's office. He had them given belts to hold up their trousers, the buttons of which had been torn off. He showed them their interrogation files and the note in red pencil, "Death to Mingrelian bandits", with Stalin's signature.

Heaping swear words on Stalin, he tells them that their torturer had had a stroke. "That **gotferan** [**"queer," in Georgian**] is almost dead. We have no time to lose. Go back to your offices and resume your duties." Communications between Kuntsevo and the Kremlin were

managed by the men of Beria³. —

The Kountsevo dacha was isolated from the country. Only a very restricted circle of people were informed of the situation, but none of them, among those close to Stalin, would have imagined that Beria wanted to shorten his life. Their fanatical devotion made the very idea blasphemy. Beria, however, played up, pretending to do everything possible to save his master. He sent several renowned specialists to the dacha, including the cardiologist PE Loukonski, but without revealing the identity of the patient to them. When they saw Stalin, they were so frightened that they trembled. Beria finished terrorizing them by asking them: "Can you guarantee the life of Comrade Stalin⁴? » —

VA Negovski, founder of resuscitation in the USSR, and his assistant Galina Chesnokova, deposited their equipment in the indicated room and were ordered to sit down, the members of the government wanting to speak to them. Beria, Malenkov and other members of the Politburo entered. "Now, Beria told them, you will tell us what you intend to do and I will listen to you very carefully. Chesnokova later said she had the immediate feeling that Beria was in charge.

The doctors were ushered into a large living room.

Stalin was lying on a sofa, his fists clenched on a sheet. His daughter Svetlana sat next to him. —

Sunday March 1, Svetlana had tried to telephone her father, but in vain, since the dacha was cut off from the world. The next day, she was attending a lecture at the Institute of World Literature when she learned that her father was ill and that she had to go to Kuntsevo; she arrived there at the same time as Bulganin and Khrushchev, who had also been warned in the morning. As she entered the room where her father was, she felt that everything around her was dying.

Everyone shared this sentiment and behaved accordingly, with the exception of Beria; very agitated, he was obviously trying to compose himself. Besides Beria, there was another person whom Svetlana eyed suspiciously; it was a female doctor whom she had sometimes seen, but whose name she did not remember. This woman was Vardo Mikhailovna Maximalishvili. Then thirty-five years old, she was one of Beria's damned souls, indeed one of his many mistresses; she had "inherited" the apartment of the famous director Meyerhold, after his arrest and execution.

This apartment, close to Nikitskie Voroda, in Moscow, has today become the Mu Dr. VM Maximalishvili lived there for many years before going to live in Tbilisi with his daughter⁶.

Stalin, in agony, had become unrecognizable. His lips were almost black, and for the last two hours he literally gasped:

"At what seemed like his last moment, he suddenly opened his eyes and looked at everyone in the room. It was a horrible look, mad or else full of anger and fear of death. [...] Then something incomprehensible happened. [...] He suddenly raised his left hand, as if pointing to something above us and calling down a curse upon us all. [...] The next moment, after a last effort, the spirit freed itself from the flesh⁷ .

When Stalin had breathed his last, Beria ordered: Take Svetlana! No one paid attention. Moments earlier, Stalin's son Vassily had been kicked out of the room, drunk as usual, who had started shouting: "You scoundrels, you've murdered my father!" Beria ordered the chief of the guards, Krustalev, to bring his car. He couldn't hide his joy. "I was not the only one

perceive it, wrote Svetlana, many of those present had the same feeling. They feared my father so much. Everyone in Russia knew that no one else held as much power as this horrible person at the time of his death. »

Some of Stalin's collaborators wept. Khrushchev, in the pure peasant tradition, fell on his knees beside Stalin, sobbing loudly. The servants and the guards came one after the other to meditate before the remains of the **khoziain** ("patron") whom they had served for so many years. Then everyone left except for Svetlana, Bulganin and Mikoyan. On the morning of the 5th, an ambulance came to take away the body; he was embalmed; all traces of poison in his body were thus destroyed. For Beria boasted to the Mingrelian generals he had freed of having poisoned Stalin and of having saved them from deportation, the Jews and them.

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Stalin's embalmed body was placed in the Hall of Columns, where his "combat comrades" and honor guard under Beria's direction watched over him. A long line of people, which stretched over several streets, filed past the remains. A crowd of police, soldiers and militiamen on horseback tried to maintain order, but they could not prevent thousands of ecstatic worshipers of Stalin from being crushed in the melee, following the tyrant to the grave. The number of victims was particularly high near Troubnaya Square¹⁰. Such a disaster, caused by popular frenzy, had already occurred more than half a century before, during the coronation of Nicholas II.

*

Shortly before his death, Stalin had commissioned the Russian translation of Herbert George Wells' science fiction novel, **The Island of Doctor Moreau**. He hadn't realized that this book could one day become the allegory of his own atrocities. We saw a mad scientist, Doctor Moreau, trying to create ideal human beings by pushing the plasticity of living forms to their limits. After plastic surgery and organ transplants on oxen, wolves, monkeys, pigs and other animals, Moreau succeeded in instilling "the Law" in those of his subjects who survived his experiments; this Law remained engraved in their spirit without possibility of disobedience. But a puma, on which Moreau

operat, broke his bonds and fled. Moreau pursued the terrified beast and was killed in battle. The news of the death of their torturer

spread among these deformed creatures. Then, over time, they forgot their fear of the master and returned to the animal state. But when Wells, in 1934, interviewed Stalin, he did not recognize him as his character; on the contrary, he described him as a man full of goodness.

After Stalin's death, millions of gulag prisoners sensed that the end of their misfortune was approaching. And yet, some victims of the great purges, still alive, sincerely lamented the death of Stalin... The majority, however, rejoiced. A Ukrainian prisoner, Roman Romanyuk, exclaimed happily, "I just heard that the whiskered shitbag got sick or died! »

Like Dr. Moreau's animals, however, the Soviets needed time to dissipate their terror.

Beria was careful not to move too quickly. He began by eroding the cult personality; he canceled the deportation order for the Mingrelians and the Jews, then closed the file of the Kremlin doctors. On April 3, they were released and taken home, although they were too weak to climb a few steps without the help of their guards. Unprecedentedly, the following day's Pravda announced that "the former Ministry of State Security" had, in arresting the Kremlin doctors, acted "incorrectly and without any legitimate basis", that all the doctors accused in **the** case had been "completely exonerated and released" and that "those accused of improper conduct of the investigations" had been arrested on criminal charges¹⁴. Beria replaced the Presidium created by Stalin with the Politburo in its pre-October 1952 composition; he melted by suppressing the Ministry of State Security into that of Internal Affairs. He thus held in his hands the two principal instruments of power.

Shortly after Stalin's death, Beria summoned Molotov to his office. The minister had hardly entered when his wife Polina Jemtjouschina threw herself on his neck; they embraced, in tears, while Beria smiled behind her desk. He released all the other Jewish wives, including Stalin's relatives, Anna Redens and Olga Alliloueva, as well as their neighbors, friends and screenwriter Alexei Kapler. Prisons crowded with

the Lubyanka were practically emptied. Beria also carried out an "unloading" of the gulag: on March 27, 1953, three weeks after Stalin's death, he promulgated an amnesty for millions of prisoners in the camps, including for "political prisoners" sentenced to sentences of up to at five years old.

On April 6, a **Pravda** editorial asserted "Soviet socialist legality must not be violated", accusing "despicable adventurers of the Ryumin type" of stirring up antagonism and slandering the Soviet people. The article also stated that a "scrupulous investigation" had established that an "honest personality such as the People's Artist of the USSR Mikhoels"

, had been slandered. Stalin's collaborators, who knew their responsibility in the murder of Mikhoëls, kept quiet. And the dismantling of the personality cult was just beginning. It would be long: reverence for "mankind's greatest genius" was universal, among the people as much as among members of the Politburo - with the exception of Beria.

The millions of prisoners freed from the gulag were the first to free themselves from their fear. In May 1953, the "special regime" camps of Norilsk, Vorkuta, Karaganda and others were rocked by uprisings, which would have been unthinkable under Stalin and would have ended in executions. The uprising in the Norilsk camp was triggered by the execution of a prisoner who had refused to work. But on May 7, a special commission arrived from Moscow and the prisoners were told: Lavrenty Pavlovich Beria himself sent us to discuss your demands. A secret committee of prisoners submitted the list; it included the revision of sentences, the removal of numbers from prisoners' uniforms and the right to correspond with relatives. But the following June, a workers' revolt in Berlin, in the Soviet zone, was put down by tanks, under the command of Marshal Zhukov.

Zhukov still admired Stalin and naively believed he had been exiled on an espionage charge fabricated by Beria. He shared his grudge with Bulganin and the two men hatched a plot to arrest Beria. Khrushchev, who was on good terms with Bulganin, joined them. The three plotters were united by the suspicion that Beria had cut short Stalin's life and that he intended to radically change the

domestic and foreign policy of Stalin. As far as the interior was concerned, they opposed the cancellation of the Russification of all the Soviet republics; Beria had, in effect, suspended Stalin's instructions to appoint Russian officials to all senior posts in the non-Russian republics and particularly to the posts of first secretaries. For them Stalin was a Russian and Beria a Georgian; that the USSR could be in the hands of a non-Russian seemed outrageous to them. In foreign policy, they were also hostile to Beria's resolution to withdraw Soviet troops from Austria and East Germany to ease international tensions. For Khrushchev, Bulganin and Zhukov, this was a betrayal of the Stalinist heritage.

On June 26, 1953, Bulganin secretly summoned Colonel-General K. Moskalenko, Lieutenant-General P. Batitsky, Major-General A. Baksov, Colonel I. Zoub and Lieutenant-Colonel V. Youferov to the Kremlin, the latter recommended by Zhukov. They got into two cars, with Zhukov and Bulganin, and went to the meeting on the pretext of attending a conference. They were led to a small room adjoining Stalin's former office. Khrushchev and Bulganin entered it. Do you know why we asked you to come? Khrushchev asked. You are tasked with stopping Beria. »

Khrushchev warned them that if they failed, they would be declared "enemies of the Zhukov people," and the five officers then proceeded to Stalin's office, where a Politburo conference was being held, around Beria. Comrades, don't worry! ", said Zhukov to the assembly and, turning to Beria: "Get up! Follow me! "He added to the address of the officers: "Shoot him down if he tries to run away! Beria was taken to the basement of the Moscow Military District HQ. Bulganin then said to the five officers: "Forget everything you know and everything you have seen." He promised them the Hero of the Soviet Union medal; he kept his word.

On July 10, 1953, two weeks after Beria's arrest, Pravda **announced** that he was "an enemy of the Communist Party and the Soviet people" and that he was being held pending trial. That same day, Colonel Kuznetsov, "personal representative" of Beria and his group of negotiators disappeared from Norilsk. At the beginning of August, the six special camps for political prisoners in the Norilsk gulag were surrounded by

troops from the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The soldiers opened fire, there were many dead and wounded; the uprising had ended. The same was true of the Vorkuta camp and other gulag camps. If Stalin was dead, his methods remained in force.

The leaders of the uprisings were taken to prison or to disciplinary camps. In one of these camps, a hundred kilometers from Norilsk, was sent a certain Chabouk Amiragibi, descendant of an old line of Georgian grand dukes; he had been one of the editors of the appeal for the insurgents of Camp No. 4 in Norilsk. Shortly before Beria's arrest, he had received a message from his sister Rodam, wife of the poet Mikhail Svetliv and close friend of Beria: she told him that he would soon be released, that Beria would empty the gulag, improve the production of goods consumption and evacuate Soviet troops from Austria and Germany.

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Beria's arrest slows destalinization. Supported by Zhukov and the army, Khrushchev and Bulganin took power. In September, the security organs were reconstituted as the Committee for State Security or KGB. In October, the conclusive test of the Soviet thermonuclear bomb was announced, which would assure Khrushchev of the “success of the enterprise of Lenin and Stalin”. Stalin was always Khrushchev's idol. Beria was being interrogated by the officers who had arrested him and who were forbidden to write down anything that would accuse Stalin of crimes. They were even forbidden to write Stalin's name, which was replaced by **instantsiya** ("authority"). One of the officers, I. Zoub, promoted to the rank of general for his role in Beria's arrest, wrote several years later:

Three and a half years after Stalin's death, no one had yet said a word about the cult **[of personality]**. For everyone, Stalin was always Stalin, the great, the infallible, the indisputable. At that time, the grief of his death had not yet subsided in the hearts of the peoples. » —

Beria's trial documents spanned nineteen volumes. More than two hundred women testified that he had raped them. He did not reject this accusation, but as for those of murder, he repeated that he had only carried out Stalin's orders, **l'instantsiya**, as the interrogators wrote. Accused of collaborating with the Mousavatist government1 —

from Azerbaijan and with the British secret service, he declared that Stalin himself had been an agent of the Okhrana; the interrogators ordered him to cease his allegations. Also accused of having fabricated false evidence against innocent people, including General Joukov, he replied again that it was Stalin who had fabricated them and forced him to sign them. Finally, accused of having shortened Stalin's life, he did not deny it, but recalled that Stalin had intended to destroy all the members of the Politburo, including himself, and that his death had prevented the deportation of the Mingrelians. Beria's deposition was read by the Politburo; it was perhaps then that Khrushchev realized that "the greatest genius of all time" had been an evil genius and that by shortening Stalin's life, Beria might have saved his own. However, at the time, Khrushchev was still far from putting an end to the cult of

Stalin's personality: he decided to make Beria bear the brunt of his master's crimes.

Beria's trial took place behind closed doors from December 18 to 23, HQ of the Moscow Military District. His six assistants, Dekanozov, Vladzimersky, Merkulov, Meshik, Goglidzé and Koboulov, were judged at the same time. The President of the Court was Marshal Koniev and the Prosecutor General, Rudenko. All the accused were condemned to death; Beria was executed first. With his hands tied behind his back, he was taken to the air-raid shelter in the basement, where he was tied to a wooden wall, to prevent the bullets from ricocheting and injuring the executioners. With the exception of Zhukov, Marshal Koniev and all the officers who had taken part in his arrest witnessed his execution. Rudenko read the sentence. "Let me say..." Beria began. "You said it all," Rudenko cut in. Gag him with a towel. Proceed to execution. General Batitski volunteered; he drew his revolver and fired. Beria's body sagged. They wrapped him in a sheet and sent him to the crematorium. His assistants were executed the same day²⁴

NOTES

¹. Recorded interview with Nougzar Sharia, **op. cit.** The events described were reported to Sharia by Gogi Zautashvili. See also A. Rybin, "Riadam IV Stalinym", **Sotsiologicheskie issledovaniya**, No. 3, 1988.

2. **Ibid.**

3. **Ibid.** Sharia brings back the memories of her uncle Peter Sharia, one of the senior Mingrelian officials in the Kremlin, who was the only one to survive the purge; he had been sentenced to ten years in prison at Vladimir Central.

4. Rybin, **op. cit.**

5. V. Likhovitskiy, "Interview with meditsinskimi rabotnikami prisoutstvovashi-mi pri deat'ii", **Meditsinskaya gazeta**, November 11, 1988, p. 8.

6. Interview with Felix Svetlov, February 8, 2001.

7. Alliloueva, **Dvadsat'p'isem k drougou**, **op. cit.**, p. 5-10.

8. V. Likhovitskiy, "How balzamirovali Stalina", **Meditsinskaya gazeta**, August 10, 1988.

9. Recorded interview with Nougzar Sharia, **op. cit.** Sharia reports the words of Stalin's Georgian bodyguards, who freely reported Beria's words that he had poisoned Stalin.

10. Memories of Nadine Brackman, wife of the author. See also interview with Nathan Finegold, New York, June 13, 1974.

11. HG Wells, **Ostrov doktora Moro**, Moscow, 1955.

12. Interview with Vitaly Svechinski, author's archives.

13. The author himself heard Romanyuk's exclamation.

14. **Pravda**, April 4, 1953.

15. **The New York Times**, September 15, 1979, p. 12.

16. **Pravda**, March 28, 1953.

17. **Pravda**, 6 April 1953.

18. Chabouk Amiragibi, currently a member of the Georgian parliament, wrote this call with the author. See also Semen Badash, **Kolyma ty moya, Kolyma**, New York, 1986, p. 68-79.

19. Amy Knight, "Beria, The Reformer", **The New York Times**, 3 November 1993.

20. S. Bystrov, "Dozvoleno k pechat'ii", **Krasnaya zvezda**, March 18-20, 1988.

21. Chabouk Amiragibi mentioned this message to the author during his incarceration at the "101 Kilometers" camp, in August-September 1953.

22. Bystrov, **op. cit.**

[23.](#) Recorded interview with Nougzar Sharia, **op. cit.**

[24.](#) Bystrov, **op. cit.** See also A. Antonov-Ovseenko, "Beria", **Younost**, December 1988.

After the 1905 revolution in Russia, a social-democratic independence movement, Musavat ("Equality") had formed in Azerbaijan; after 1917, it found itself in conflict with the annexationist aims of the Bolsheviks. There was thus a Mussava government in Ghajda, while there was a communist government in Baku, led by Stepan Shaoumian. This situation ended in 1920, with the occupation of the country by the Red Army .

38

"You can't bleach a black dog"

Shortly after his execution, Khrushchev and the Politburo commissioned one of the Central Committee secretaries, PN Pospelov, to write a report on Beria's crimes. A chance discovery changed Khrushchev's mind. The workers who were transforming Stalin's apartment in the Kremlin into a museum unearthed a safe sealed in the wall. They took him to Khrushchev. Several years later, he will mention only one of the documents he had found there: a letter in which Lenin threatened to break off his relations with Stalin. "I was surprised that this letter had been preserved.

Stalin probably forgot he existed," Khrushchev wrote in his memoirs.

- He did not mention the other documents; colleagues of the Politburo opposed any embarrassing revelation about Stalin's past. But these documents slowly eroded his reverence for Stalin and he finally decided to tackle the cult of personality to which the tyrant had been subjected. His colleagues' objections notwithstanding, his February 24, 1956 secret report to the Twentieth Congress, also known as the "Secret Speech", condemned this cult; it was read in secret to party members throughout the USSR. Party leaders in Eastern Europe also received it, and the report eventually reached Western Europe, where it was published.

- Alexander Orlov, the NKVD general who had crossed over to the West and taken refuge in the United States, published an article in the weekly **Life**, in April 1956: "The Sensational Secret Behind Stalin's Damnation". He revealed the information received in February 1938 from his cousin Zinovy Kastnelson on Stalin's file in the Okhrana and the Tukhachevsky plot: "Whatever the circumstances, it seems certain that evidence that Stalin was an agent of the tsarist police were subject to the collective leadership of the party.

- In the same issue of **Life**, Isaac Don Levine, who had been Stalin's first biographer in the West, published another article ("A document on Stalin as a Tsarist spy"). He argued that the "Eremin letter" introduced to the States United in 1946 was a document

authentication⁷. Orlov did not cite this document, but he privately told Levine that in his opinion this letter was "a forgery made by someone who knew the truth". The "letter Eremine" had followed a tortuous path:

Having failed to sell it to the German Embassy in Shanghai in 1941-1942, Golovachev attempted to cede it to the American government. George F. Kennan, the leading American Soviet scientist at the time and future ambassador to Moscow, said that "for various reasons" it did not seem to him that the United States government should "deal with documents of this kind." ". Golovachev ends up selling the "Eremin letter" for 15,000 dollars to three chosen Russian émigrés, the former Russian ambassador to the United States, Boris Bakhmetiev, Boris Sergievski, an aviation pioneer, and Vadim Makarov, the son of a famous Russian admiral. They communicated the "Eremin letter" to Clare Boothe Luce, a right-wing politician, diplomat and wife of newspaper magnate and owner of Life, Henry Luce. She invited Levine to examine the document at her **property** . of Connecticut and asked him to investigate whether it was genuine or not.

Levine had been receiving information about Stalin's connections since 1926 with the Okhrana and he had published the first article to this effect during the Bukharin trial, in March 1938 ("Stalin suspected of wanting to hide his past through trials¹⁰") . His investigation lasted ten years; she took him to the suburbs of Paris, to see an emigrant general from the Okhrana, Alexander Spiridovitch. This one showed him a silver ewer, which had been offered to him when he had escaped an attack in 1905; among the signatures engraved on it, there was that of Eremine; it was very similar to that of the "letter Eremine". Spiridovitch offered the ewer to Levin. Moved by the gesture, Levine said: "I had the ultimate proof that Stalin had been a Tsarist spy¹¹.

— »

Levine's investigation, which began in 1946, had probably been reported to Stalin by his agents, but he did nothing to prevent the publication of the "Eremin letter"; no doubt he hoped that the numerous errors with which it was riddled would suffice to discredit it as false; he did not dream that they could also, on second analysis, reveal the intention to indicate that there was falsification, thus making him appear as the only potential beneficiary of this arrangement.

Orlov's and Levin's articles were published under a common title: "What Khrushchev Does Not Say: Stalin's Darkest Secrets."

Orlov's article was met with perfect silence. Historians and Soviet scholars evaded the question of Stalin's membership in the Okhrana and the role his file had played in the history of the USSR.

But they could not entirely reject the opinion of Orlov, whose 1953 work, **The Secret History of Stalin's Crimes**, was considered an important and credible source of information, and all the more so since Khrushchev's Secret Speech confirmed several of Orlov's allegations.

Nevertheless, these revelations about the Stalin dossier and the Tukhachevsky plot remained ignored for decades by Western historians, with one exception, Bertram D. Wolfe, who wrote: "If the Levin document [the "Eremin letter"] **demands** verification Orlov's article is entirely convincing¹². ,

»

Levine's article, on the other hand, sparked heated controversy. KGB agents and USSR sympathizers in the United States attempted to personally discredit Levine, in order to prove that the letter was a forgery. Martin K. Tytell, presenting himself as an "expert on disputed documents", attacked Levine during a conference¹³ (Tytell had testified at the famous trial of Alger Hiss, accused of being a Soviet spy). The Senate Subcommittee on Homeland Security debated the role of Soviet espionage in the campaign to discredit the "Eremin Letter". Grigory Aronson, a Sovietologist, took a diametrically opposite attitude and declared that the question of whether Stalin had been a Tsarist spy was only a "trifle" and should not divert attention from the horrific facts of his reign of terror.

Levine countered that if it could be established that Stalin had been a Tsarist agent and a traitor to the revolution, one could strike "a blow that would shake the Soviet dictatorship to its foundations". And he added that his forthcoming book would leave no doubt that Stalin had indeed been a Tsarist spy, but would only be the first step in unraveling the mystery of Stalin's life. This book, **Stalin's Great Secret**, however, maintained that the "Eremin letter" was an authentic document.

In June 1956, Golovachev published an article in **Rossia**, the Russian-language newspaper in New York, to deny that he had sold a forgery: "I must affirm that this document on the role of Stalin in pre-revolutionary Russia is indisputable and is part official archives." He promised to publish in the near future other documents proving Stalin's ties to the Okhrana and to reveal how they had come into his possession;¹⁸ he died without having published anything else. He would have been struggling to prove anything, nor to say that the "Eremin letter" and other forgeries had been given to him by Lyushkov, head of the NKVD in the Far East. His widow gave all his "official papers", including other false documents, in the Bakhmetiev archives; they are still there.

Proof that the "Eremin letter" was a forgery was established in 1957, when the Okhrana Foreign Archives at Stanford University's Hoover Institution were opened to researchers. The sixteen large boxes containing the foreign documents of the Okhrana had been brought back from the Russian Embassy in Paris in 1924 by the ambassador of the Provisional Russian Government in France, Vassily Maklakov.

Under an agreement with the Hoover Foundation, the archives would not be open to the public until three months after Maklakov's death.

Many documents signed by Eremin were found there; the real signatures did not include the long initials adorning the signature of the "letter Eremin". In addition, the archives contained the register of Okhrana officers on active duty in 1913; it quoted Captain Vladimir Fedorovitch Jelezniakov, while the "Eremin letter" was addressed to "Aleksei Fedorovitch Jelezniakov". These errors were enough to

they alone demonstrated that the "Eremin letter" was a forgery and several researchers concluded that it had been intended to discredit Stalin, which was exactly the goal sought by him. Nevertheless, they were not all fooled: George F. Kennan judged that the "Eremin letter" was "one of those curious documents, the doubtful elements of which may be said to be too obvious to be considered authentic, but whose authentic elements are too strong for us to be able to conclude that they are false integrals."

The "letter Eremin" had therefore just been recognized as a forgery when Eremin's two daughters arrived in New York from Chile, hoping

to be able to sell souvenirs of their father, Alexandre Eremine, whose name was mentioned in Levine's article. But interest in the "Eremin letter" then faded, and they had no documents proving Stalin's career in the Okhrana. Eremine was dead; no one asked them when or how; they therefore left for Chile. Vain efforts were undertaken in 1974 to find them; information confirmed that "the Eremine family had lived for some time in Chile", but that it was now impossible to trace them.

Until 1989, the Soviet press made no mention of the "letter Eremin". Since its publication in 1956, however, it had been discussed in the Kremlin. In the wake of his "secret speech", Khrushchev commissioned a group of surviving Old Bolsheviks to investigate Stalin's crimes, including his membership in the 'Okhrana. A special commission of the party's control committee was set up for this purpose, which established that Stalin had forged Okhrana documents to glorify his past as a "great revolutionary" and that he had flooded the archives with them. According to a Soviet historian who participated in the investigation, "in 1962, OG Shatunovskaya, a member of the Control Committee and of the Commission for the Rehabilitation of Victims of the Personality Cult, raised before the Central Committee the question of whether 'all the documents showing that Stalin had been an agent of the Okhrana should not be published. But Khrushchev was then unwilling to divulge the commission's findings, observing that this would amount to saying that "for more than thirty years the country had been ruled by an agent of the Tsarist Okhrana."

The Old Bolsheviks established that Stalin's files in the Okhrana had once been found in the archives and taken to Stalin²⁵. They submitted the articles of Orlov and Levin to Khrushchev; it was in this way that Khrushchev learned of the discovery of the file by Shtein, the rivalry between Stalin and Roman Malinovsky, the main agent of the Okhrana, as well as the Tukhachevsky conspiracy.

— He no doubt then remembered that Stalin had taken alarm at the surname of General Rodion Malinovsky and that he had asked him to watch over him. Khrushchev then perhaps made the connection with the other Malinovsky.

The Kremlin nevertheless showed sustained interest in the "Eremin letter". In 1962, it was stolen from the Bakhmetiev Archives (Columbia University) and brought back to Moscow. Placed in 1956 in the safe of the Tolstoy Foundation in a New York bank²⁷ it was then deposited in the In that same year 1962, several party historians were authorized to examine it in Moscow²⁸.

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Stalin's membership in the Okhrana was probably not the only reason why Khrushchev took a dislike to his former idol; the humiliations he had suffered played their part in it. Stalin thus used to clean his pipe by tapping it on Khrushchev's bald head, saying: "**Durachok ty, Nikitiouslychka, durachok!**" ("**You** 're a fool, little Nikita, a fool!") and Khrushchev had to force a smile, as he suffered.²⁹ Stalin also liked to place burning papers between the fingers of Politburo members to see if they resisted. to this torture. Khrushchev also remembered how Stalin forced him to drink and then to dance the Ukrainian **gapak** for the sole purpose of amusing the gallery, he who was obese and for whom these efforts were painful. he is ashamed, but his desire to

to have knelt before the body of the dictator and to —
have kissed his hand³¹ to unmask the imposture encountered the obstinate opposition of the Politburo, supported by the bureaucracy of the party.

In 1957, in fact, three members of the Politburo, Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov, tried to depose Khrushchev, accusing him of undermining the Soviet system by exposing Stalin's crimes. He was defended by Marshal Joukov, who was himself supported by the army. Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov were then sent "to work" away from Moscow. Bulganin and Voroshilov were expelled from the Politburo. Zhukov being no longer useful to him, Khrushchev accused him of "Bonapartist designs". Stalin's old minions in the Politburo were replaced by Khrushchev's proteges, including future secretaries-general Brezhnev, Chernenko and Andropov. But while they owed their promotion to Khrushchev, the newly elected officials did not share his dislike of Stalin and they felt that exposing him as an agent of the Okhrana would weaken the Soviet system; that would be like sawing off the branch on which they were

The anti-Stalinist movement initiated by Khrushchev caused a split in the communist camp. Mao Zedong and the dictator of Albania, Enver Hoxha, a staunch Stalinist, refused to attend the XXIst Congress which opened in Moscow in October 1961. In his address to the Congress, Khrushchev declared that what he was trying to do in criticizing Stalin was to prevent a new cult of personality. He accused the leader of Albania of using Stalinist methods against his own because of — opposition from most of the Politburo, he people. gave up giving a speech in which he accused Stalin of having had Kirov assassinated. But he dealt a resounding blow to the dictator's memory: on the night of October 31, 1961, he secretly had Stalin's embalmed body removed from the mausoleum and buried near the Kremlin wall. A simple slab of black granite marked the location: "IV Stalin, 1879-1953." And Stalin's name was erased from the mausoleum, where Lenin now rested alone. Stalin's funeral was conducted by soldiers in the light of the headlights of military trucks. —

Then, in the summer of 1962, the remains of Ivan the Terrible, idolized during the Stalin era as one of Russia's greatest statesmen, were removed from his tomb in the Cathedral of Archangel Michael. , At Kremlin, where they had rested since his death in 1584, and sent to a laboratory for analysis; a considerable quantity of arsenic was found there, which gave reason to believe that the Tsar had been poisoned. An eminent Soviet anthropologist, Mikhail Guerassimov, known for his reconstructions of Peking Man and Java Man, proceeded in the same way from the bones of Tsar Ivan; it turned out that Ivan had been tall, six feet three inches (1.90 meters), which was exceptional for sixteenth-century standards. Not content with profaning Ivan's tomb and subjecting his remains to the cold gaze of science, Khrushchev launched a press campaign against the Stalinist glorification of this tsar; books glorifying Ivan the Terrible were badly abused. —

In time, Khrushchev imagined that he could surpass Stalin. During a reception at the Embassy of Yugoslavia, he got so drunk that he fell on all fours, claiming that he was "the locomotive of history". When he drank, he declared to his generals that, under his

orders, they would win greater victories than Stalin's over Germany. Then followed the bravado of Cuban missiles, the threat made during a visit from the United States ("We'll bury you!"), and the kicking of his desk at the United Nations. Finally, he pursued Stalin with his posthumous aggressiveness: at the beginning of March 1963, in a speech on the class struggle, he declared: "There has been in the history of the Bolshevik Party more than one case of betrayal of the revolution, for example that of the double agent Malinowski, member of the Douma³⁷.

— The allusion was not lost for everyone. In the

summer of 1964, KGB officials learned that Khrushchev planned to reveal in a forthcoming article the rivalry between Stalin and Malinovsky, as well as Stalin's ties to the Okhrana; they knew the hostility of the Politburo to this project³⁸. At a reception for a Hungarian delegation in July, Khrushchev delivered an address. At one point he exclaimed in a breathy, high-pitched voice: "Vain are the

efforts of those who want to change the direction of this country and take under their wing all the bad deeds committed by Stalin... No one can absolve him... You cannot whitewash a black dog³⁹ —

". Also for the first time, Khrushchev publicly hinted that Stalin had been assassinated:

"There have been many cruel tyrants in human history, but they all ended up under the axe, the same ax that ensured their power. » —

This passage was redacted from the official version. The ax metaphor suggests that Khrushchev knew that Stalin had been killed by his own executioner, Beria; in view of the revelation of Stalin's crimes, this made Beria not an infamous being, but a hero. However, the Politburo was hostile to this revision of Soviet history. And its members were alarmed by a statement by Enver Hoxha on May 24, 1964.

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For him, Khrushchev belonged to these "intriguers": in 1964, in fact, of all Stalin's close combat comrades, only Khrushchev and Mikoyan remained in the Politburo.

Brezhnev and his allies in the Politburo concluded that by revealing Kremlin secrets, Khrushchev was acting irrationally and should be removed from power. While on vacation in Pitsunda on the Black Sea in October 1964, they accused him of "voluntarism" and "wild ideas". Brezhnev took power; he reduced Khrushchev's article on the Stalin-Malinovsky rivalry to the latter's membership in the Okhrana, with no further mention of Stalin.

Brezhnev tried to restore Stalin's prestige as "Great Leader", but he failed. Khrushchev's "secret speech", which was no longer secret, since it was published in 1959⁴³ had tarnished the tyrant's reputation.

His efforts clashed with the millions of gulag prisoners Khrushchev had freed. The very story of the gulag entered Soviet literature with the publication, authorized by Khrushchev, of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's book, **A Day of Ivan Denisovitch**.

The slang of the camps, forged by generations of prisoners, invaded everyday language. Groups of dissidents were forming, secretly writing and distributing anti-Soviet **samizdat**. In June 1968, Pavel Litvinov, a grandson of Maxim Litvinov, and a group of dissidents demonstrated in Red Square against the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia; they were arrested and exiled. But the repression did not stop this movement. On "the island of Dr Moreau", the fear that had reigned during the era

Stalinism was slowly dissipating. On the death of Brezhnev, his successors attempted Stalin. Defense Minister DF Ustinov said at a meeting

from the Politburo, July 12, 1984: Stalin, whatever one may say, embodies our history. No enemy has earned us so much vexation as Khrushchev with his policy on the history of our party, our state and Stalin. The Chairman of the Council of Ministers, N. Tikhonov, agreed and declared: "Khrushchev has smeared us and our policy in the face of the world. And the chairman of the KGB, VM Chebrikov, concludes:

Under Khrushchev, lots of people were rehabilitated illegally. The fact is that they had been rightly punished. Take, for example, Solzhenitsyn⁴⁴. »

As Secretary General, Mikhail Gorbachev proclaimed the policy of **perestroika** ("reconstruction") and **glasnost** ("transparency"), promising to fill the voids in Soviet history. His intention was not to change the system, but to make it more efficient. He wanted to retain party and police control over the political and economic life of the country. The Empire, however, was collapsing; the satellite countries freed themselves; self-determination asserted itself in the Soviet republics. Gorbachev had not expected that perestroika and glasnost would so accelerate the disintegration of the system he wanted to save. Information about Stalin's crimes, kept under wraps for generations, surged. Newspapers reported discoveries of mass graves across the country. A Memorial Society was formed and at a session in 1988 its members declared that the Soviet Union was "built on skeletons". A former prisoner of the Vorkuta camp, Igor Dobroshan, added: "There is no one who has not been affected by Stalin's repression. The Terror of the French Revolution was nothing compared to the Stalinist terror. It will take us two hundred years to eradicate this infection. L. Lanina, a journalist, wrote in an independent Moscow publication: —

"In millions of nameless mass graves rest millions of nameless victims with tags attached to their feet [...], in Kolyma, in Solovky, in Vorkuta, in Kazakhstan. Their tombs are the true sanctuaries that have been trodden down, and the nation's salvation and atonement now depend on our finding the sacred way back to them. —
»

Controversies flared up across the country in 1989 when a history professor at the Moscow Institute of International Relations, F. D. Volkov, relying on the "Eremin letter", declared that Stalin had been an agent of the Okhrana. "For thirty years, he said, we were governed by a Tsarist agent⁴⁸. — In an article in the **Moskovskaya**

Pravda, he maintained that the "Eremin letter" was an authentic document. On April 19, the newspaper **Voprosy istorii KPSS** ("Problems of the History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union") published a long official rebuttal under the title: "Was Stalin an agent of the Okhrana?" moreover, the authors noted the errors of the "letter Eremin" and

concluded that it was a fake. Nothing in the Soviet archives, they argued, indicated that Stalin had worked for the Okhrana. But they added a cautious reservation:

"We have in no way, in our research, attempted to bring a definitive answer to the question whether Stalin was a secret [Okhrana] collaborator . —

On July 2, **Moskovskaya Pravda** took up the detailed criticism of the "Eremin letter" and concluded that it was a forgery intended to discredit Stalin and that "even Trotsky, in connection with the provocation of the Okhrana, had rejected this accusation as monstrous and absolutely — unprovable. The contradictory opinions that flourished in the press confused readers. One of these summarized the situation in a

letter: "Everything would be perfectly clear for supporters and opponents of the thesis of the secret agent of Okhrana IV Djougashvili if his personal file was open to everyone52. » —

Another question was also debated: Stalin's mental health. It was reported that Bekhterev had diagnosed him as paranoid. Some renowned psychiatrists agreed, others offered different definitions of his illness, "paranoid schizophrenia, delusional condition associated with paranoid psychopathy, severe psychopathy", and even placed the dictator in the category of "psychopath es epileptics". A psychiatrist objected that too little was known to make a final judgment, psychopathies being either genetic or environmental, and manifesting in youth. Now, what do we know of Stalin in this period of his life? Nothing special, except that he was cruel to animals. »

Honorary Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Stanford University School of Medicine, Russell V. Lee wrote: "An

investigation of the role of insanity in the conduct of business human beings would provide a fascinating field for historians and psychiatrists. We would reap a rich harvest from all the bizarre actions of deranged potentates. The events of this terrible 20th century offer the best illustration of the capacity of the mentally ill to abolish all rational behavior. We have thus seen one of the most developed and intellectual peoples of all time completely

overwhelmed by the sheer power of a typical paranoid, Adolf Hitler. Such phenomena tend to be recurrent, alas for humanity. In Russia, there was Joseph Stalin, the man of steel and the executioner of his own citizens.

Completely devoid of scruples of any kind, he was a sociopath, a moral imbecile, and he was in complete control of Russia. »

NOTES

1. Khrushchev, **op. cit.**, p. 344-345.
2. **Ibid.**, p. 44.
3. **Ibid.**, p. 347-351.
4. The author was present during the reading of the "secret speech", at the firm Rossmetaloproekt, in Moscow, in March 1956.
5. A member of the Polish Communist Party, Seweryn Bialer, flees in the West with a copy of Khrushchev's speech.
6. Orlov, "The Sensational Secret", **op. cit.**, p. 44.
7. Levine, "A Document on Stalin", **op. cit.**, p. 51.
8. Interview with ID Levine in Chappaqua, 1976, **op. cit.**
9. George F. Kennan, "The Historiography of the Early Political Career of Stalin", lecture of November 22, 1970, published in **Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society**, June 2, 1971, p. 276.
10. **Journal American**, March 3, 1938.
11. Levine, "A Document on Stalin", **op. cit.**, p. 51.
12. **Life**, May 11, 1956.
13. **Senate Internal Security Subcommittee Report**, minutes of the meeting of May 8, 1957, p. 4184.
14. **Ibid.**, meeting of October 1, 1957, p. 4126-4156.
15. Grigory Aronson, "Was Stalin a Tsarist Agent? ", **The New Leader**, August 20, 1956.
16. ID Levine, "Stalin Was a Tsarist Agent", typescript copy of a article for **The New Leader** (Levine's archive, author's archive).
17. ID Levine, **Stalin's Great Secret**, New York, 1956; the book repeats the points of the **Life article**.

[18.](#) The cutting of Golovachev's article, taken up by **Evreiski Mir** of the October 30, November 6 and 13, 1992 (Nos. 23, 24 and 25), is in the Bakhmetiev Archives of the Library of Rare Documents and Manuscripts at Columbia University.

[19.](#) These forgeries are in the Bakhmetiev archives; see note former.

[20.](#) Smith, **op. cit.**, p. VII.

[21.](#) Kennan, **op. cit.**, p. 167.

[22.](#) Interview with Levine, **cf.** footnote 8.

[23.](#) Letters from the Tolstoy Foundation, October 9 and December 9, 1974 (author's archive).

[24.](#) FD Volkov, **Vzlet i padenie Stalina**, Moscow 1992, p. 23.

[25.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 315-323. See also, by the same author, "Dvadtsatyi vek", **Obshchestvenoe-politicheskii literatouryi almanakh**, London, 1977, p. 10 **sq.**

[26.](#) Letter to the editors of **Moskovskaya Pravda**, OG Shatunovskaya and CB Shaboldaev, published July 2, 1989. See also Orlov, **op. cit.**

[27.](#) Levine, "A Document on Stalin", **op. cit.**

[28.](#) **Moskovskaya Pravda**, March 30, 1989. See also Volkov, **op. cit.**, p. 16.

[29.](#) Recorded interview with Nougzar Sharia, **op. cit.**

[30.](#) Medvedev, **op. cit.**, p. 331.

[31.](#) B. Ravitch, Professor of Chemistry and Party Secretary at the Institute of Non-Ferrous Metals Association (and the author's next door neighbor in Moscow), described Khrushchev's behavior to me, behavior which was then well known to party functionaries. See also Alliloueva, **Dvadsat'pîsem k drougou**, **op. cit.**, p. 6; Stalin's Daughter describes Khrushchev's crying at Stalin's death. In his **Memoirs**, however, Khrushchev attributed his own behavior to Beria and wrote: "Beria fell to his knees, seized Stalin's hand and kissed it" (**op. cit.**, p. 318).

[32.](#) TT Rigby, **The Stalin Dictatorship: Krushchev's Secret Speech and Other Documents**, Sidney, 1968, p. 95.

[33.](#) Recorded interview with Vassily Rouditch in Chappaqua, NY, 1975.

Ruditch reports the testimony of Olga Shatunovskaya, a member of the Party Control Committee, and according to which AN Shelepin, at the time, "restalized" the Soviet secret police. In November 1961, the latter was appointed to the secretariat of the Central Committee. See also Dziak, **op. cit.**, p. 152.

[34.](#) F. Koniev, "How perezakhoranivali Stalina", **Military-historicheskii journal**, Moscow, 1989.

[35.](#) **The New York Times**, April 28 and July 29, 1963. See also Robert Payne, "A Man Like No Other", **The New York Times**, 8 September 1963.

[36.](#) SM Doubrovsky, "Protiv idealizatsii deyatel'nosti Ivana IV", **Voprosy istorii**, no. 8, August 1956, p. 121-128.

[37.](#) **Pravda**, March 10, 1963.

[38.](#) Interview with Youry Krotkov, KGB agent who took refuge in the West, author of the book **The Red Monarch**, New York, 1972. Krotkov described the internal twists and turns of Khrushchev's plan to publish the Stalin Malinovski rivalry within the Okhrana. See also BK Erenfeld, "Delo Malinovskogo", **Voprosy istorii**, no. 7, 1965, p. 106-116.

[39.](#) **Pravda**, 20 July 1964.

[40.](#) Radio Moscow I, July 19, 1964 (Radio Liberty recorded archive).

[41.](#) Conquest, **The Great Terror**, **op. cit.**, p. 172.

[42.](#) Erenfeld, **op. cit.**

[43.](#) Khrushchev, **Doklad na zakrytom zasedanii XX s'ezda KPSS**.

[44.](#) **The New York Times**, February 8, 1993.

[45.](#) **Ogoniok**, No. 39, 1988. **Sputnik**, No. 109, 1988. Zenon Pozniak, "Perejitoe", **Moskovskie newsy**, 1988. Z. Pozniak and Evgueny Shigalev, "Kouropati doroga deathi", **Literatoura i mastatsva**, Minsk, June 3, 1988.

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[46.](#) Schmidt-Choier, **in: Sputnik**, Israel, November 17, 1988, p. 4 **sq.**

[47.](#) L. Lanina, "Madam Tusso i tovarisch Kroupskaia", **Panorama**, July 3, 1988.

[48](#) Schmidt-Choier, **op. cit.**

[49](#). G. Aroutounov and F. Volkov, "K sydou istorii", **Moskovskaya pravda**, March 30, 1989.

[50](#). BI Kaptelov and ZI Peregoudova, "Bil li Stalin agentom okranki? ", **Voprosy istorii KPSS**, Moscow, April 1989.

[51](#). "Versiya ne podtverjdaevtsa", **Moskovskaya pravda**, July 2, 1989, p. 4 sq.

[52](#). **Ibid.**

[53](#). Russell V. Lee, "When Insanity Holds the Spectre," **The New York Times**, April 12, 1989.

post-face

More than half a century after Stalin's death, his shadow still hangs over Russia. Millions of men died, executed or

perished in the gulag. No family has been spared. After having exterminated ten million peasants, Stalin reduced the others to the status of serfs in the kolkhoz system. He left a legacy of a dysfunctional economy that defies reform. The vast majority of Russians still suffer from abject poverty and deprivation, while a handful of new rich, the oligarchs and mobsters, indulge in the privileges and opulence of post-Soviet Russia, just as they once did. the party elite. Stalin threw Russia back to the barbarism of the time of his favorite tsar, the demented Ivan Grozny, known as the Terrible.

This heritage permeates daily life without remission: all Soviet leaders since Stalin, with the exception of Boris Yeltsin, began their careers in the secret police. Beria had led it for many years. Khrushchev had been Stalin's agent provocateur in the 1930s, before serving as his henchman during the purges. Brezhnev led the purges in Ukraine in the 1930s, and in the early 1950s Stalin sent him to Moldova to deport the Jewish population there. Andropov was for many years the head of the KGB before becoming general secretary of the party in November 1982. Chernenko had begun his career during the purges of the 1930s; he led a detachment of executioners in the Far East, then joined Brezhnev in Dnepropetrovsk and later in Moldavia; he became Secretary General in February 1984. When he died on March 10, 1985, a line of Stalin's heirs died who participated in the bloodbaths of the great purges. But the role of the secret police remained more dominant than ever.

Due to his age, Gorbachev, appointed general secretary in March 1985, had not been involved in the purges. But he was still a creature of the secret police, who had helped him enroll in law school at Moscow University; he was "elected" there as secretary of the Komsomol cell, the Union of Communist Youth, a post reserved for

collaborators of the KGB or Ministry of State Security (then Committee of State Security after 1953). He rose through the party ranks and befriended KGB chief Andropov, who got him elected to the Politburo. It was in fact Andropov who introduced the word **perestroika** and began to rebuild the Soviet system to save it from political and economic collapse.

When he became general secretary and promised to establish **perestroika** and **glasnost**, Gorbachev was determined to maintain the communist system as well as to stay in power as supreme leader. But his half-measures led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Unlike his

predecessors, Boris Yeltsin, elected president of Russia, joined the party **after** Stalin's death, when the power of the secret police had been greatly reduced. He had been appointed secretary of the party organization in Sverdlovsk because, having been trained as an engineer, he had shown himself to be a competent industrial manager. Admittedly, no one in the apparatus of power in the Soviet era was completely isolated from the secret police, but Yeltsin's relations with them were reduced to a minimum. He appeared, among the party elite, as the most appropriate person to break with the Stalinist past. As president, he was in the best position to restore the legitimacy of power, brutally interrupted on July 17, 1918, when the tsar and his family were assassinated on the orders of Lenin. Eighty years later, Yeltsin attended the state funeral for the remains of Nicholas II and his family. In

his televised address to the nation, he confessed: "The truth

has been hidden for eighty years. We have to admit it tomorrow, and I will see to it. From a human point of view, this is the only thing to do.

— »

But despite the revelations uncovered under Gorbachev and Yeltsin, the truth was certainly not restored in its integrity. In 1993, under President Yeltsin, a law was passed which forbade the publication of the contents of the Soviet archives. This is the reason why so many Russians continue to worship Lenin and Stalin as sacrosanct idols.

Crowds still press in tight rows before the embalmed corpse of Lenin in his mausoleum in Red Square. And in 1999, some 25% of the electorate voted for the Communist Party in the Duma elections.

When, on the eve of the new millennium, Yeltsin resigned, he begged the Russians to excuse him for not having fulfilled all their wishes.

Despite his good intentions, Yeltsin had succumbed to the weight of Stalin's legacy. He had twice led a brutal war against the Chechens, whom Stalin had partially exiled to Siberia on February 23, 1944. Shortly before resigning and during a visit to Beijing, he had also resumed dragging the Soviet sword, threatening the West of "the entire nuclear arsenal". It was the old refrain that Khrushchev had intoned as he tapped his shoe on his desk at the UN: "We'll bury you!" »

Yeltsin made up for his lack of connections in the KGB by appointing three men who had made a career there, Sergei Stepashin, Evgeny Primakov and Vladimir Putin, as Prime Minister. On the day of his resignation, he appointed Putin interim president, certain that in this way his protégé would be elected to the post. Putin had for years been the KGB's liaison officer with his German counterpart, the GDR's infamous Stasi, which spied on both West and East Germans. Putin's nickname was Stasy. His popularity soared when he promised to "liberate" Chechnya, annihilate "bandits and terrorists" and restore "Russian national pride". He boasted of having "liberated Grozny", without specifying that the Russian army had practically razed the city to the point that there was not a single building left on which to hang his flag.

Putin blocked an uncensored report from Chechnya from reaching the Russians and the West, and he ordered Internet surveillance. He greatly increased the budget of the secret police. And the Russian secret services are now merged into the Ministry of the Interior, with which they form a colossus comparable to the KGB2.

Grigory Yavlinski, leader of the liberal Yabloko party, defined the alliance of supporters of Putin and the large communist faction in the Duma as "an aggressive and obedient majority". A century and a half earlier, the poet Mikhail Lermontov, already exclaimed, on his departure for exile: "Farewell, badly washed Russia, land of slaves and masters, farewell to you, blue uniforms, and to you, who obey these people!" In Lermontov's time, 90% of Russians were in serfdom; these "blue uniforms" were those of the Independent Corps of Gendarmerie, the secret police.

blue uniforms" are ancient in Russian history, originating in the **oprichniki**, those free corps of palace guards, mainly recruited from the underworld who terrorized the country under Ivan Grozny and slaughtered all those whom the deranged spirit of the tyrant perceived as enemies. As for the Independent Corps of Gendarmerie, it formed the backbone of the Okhrana at the beginning of the 20th century. This period has gone down in history as **Zubatovschina**, due to the common employment of agents provocateurs introduced by Zubatov, head of the Moscow Okhrana; this is also called "police socialism".

Stalin was a creation of the Okhrana. Under its various names, its secret police was an outsized Okhrana. This is Stalin's most stubborn legacy, and it is the subject of this book, which tells a story almost entirely unrecognized. However, those who do not know history are doomed to repeat it. It will take generations to erase habits of thought acquired during Stalin's long brutal reign. By a law of nature, nations and individuals can find happiness only in freedom, and no nation is free so long as it attacks its own people and others. The fight for a free Russia continues.

NOTES

1. "Yeltsin, in Reversal, will attend Rite for the Czar and Family", **New York Times**, July 17, 1998, p. A-3.
2. **New York Post**, February 11, 2000, p. 26.

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I am solely responsible for the selection, evaluation and quotations of evidence, as well as the content of these pages.

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